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The Bear in Selected American, Canadian, and Native Literature: A Pedagogical Symbol Linking Humanity and Nature

By

Paul Lawrence Lumsden ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and
Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE BEAR IN SELECTED AMERICAN, CANADIAN, AND NATIVE LITERATURE: A PEDAGOGICAL SYMBOL LINKING HUMANITY AND NATURE submitted by PAUL LAWRENCE LUMSDEN in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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I've discovered--and it's still happening--that all you have to do is say 'bear' to a storyteller and all kinds of tales come pouring out. (Marian Engel)

*

We never see these things directly; we see them only through a prism of conventionalized commonplaces, outworn formulas within the art itself, the fossilized forms of earlier attempts to escape from nature and reality. Only a distorted imagination that breaks away from all this and sees reality as a strange, wonderful, terrible, fantastic world is creative in the human sense of the term. (Northrop Frye)

*

I am a bear. I do have this capacity to become a bear. The bear sometimes takes me over and I am transformed. I never know precisely when it is going to happen. Sometimes it becomes a struggle. (N. Scott Momaday)

ABSTRACT

The bear in American, Canadian, and Native Literature provides a literal and symbolic link between the human characters and the natural world they have forsaken or forgotten in their quest for a civilized life, a life that is, ironically, detrimental to all nature--including human nature. The narratives explored in this thesis depict the consequences of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual separation from nature and the natural, instinctual, animal aspect of ourselves, and the enlightenment and, in some cases, the healing that occurs through encounters with bears. Significantly, the bear, because of its peculiar qualities--it is ferocious yet gentle, animal yet somehow near human, instinctive yet methodical, known but unknowable--acts as the advisor, the teacher, and the healer in the stories.

This thesis explores the bear as a pedagogical symbol beginning with analysis of three American works, Thomas Bangs Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" (1841), William Faulkner's "The Bear" (1942), Norman Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam?* (1967); followed by five Canadian stories, Ernest Thompson Seton's *The Biography of a Grizzly* (1899), "Johnny Bear"(1900), and *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac* (1902), Charles G.D. Roberts' *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (1900) and Marian Engel's *Bear* (1976); and concluding with a Native American novel, N. Scott Momaday's *The Ancient Child* (1989). With the exception of Seton's stories where the reader is the intended pupil, the protagonists in the

stories, as they are reunited with nature, achieve some degree of self-actualization with the aid of a bear.

There is a similar pattern shared in each narrative, although the context within which the bear is portrayed differs according to the cultural perspectives in each work, and among individual works. First the protagonist becomes physically aware of the bear; then has contact and interaction with the bear, which lead to changes in the protagonist that range from awareness of his or her separation from nature, to psychological growth, maturation and self-actualization. Finally, in Momaday's novel, there is a healing ceremony. The American and Canadian works stop short of including the healing ceremony; however, they do illustrate that North American literature is indebted to the Native American perspective of the bear.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..1

CHAPTER ONE

Sensing the Quarry: Recognition of the Sensate Bear in Thomas Bangs Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas"....................27

CHAPTER TWO

Nature's Teacher in William Faulkner's "The Bear": Learning Respect for the Wilderness..49

CHAPTER THREE

Killing the Bear: Symbolically Destroying America in Norman Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam?*..71

CHAPTER FOUR

Ernest Thompson Seton's *The Biography of a Grizzly*, "Johnny Bear," and *Monarch the Big Bear of Tallac*: Provoking an Awareness of the Wilderness..93

CHAPTER FIVE

Charles G. D. Roberts' Kroof: Lessons in Human-Nature Compatibility in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*.............................117

CHAPTER SIX

Self-Actualization Through Loving a Bear: Marian Engel's *Bear*..134

CHAPTER SEVEN

Permeating the Human-Bear Barrier: N. Scott Momaday's *The Ancient Child* 157

CONCLUSION..186

WORKS CITED..193

INTRODUCTION

> Versatile in meaning as he is, in his natural state, the bear is many things to men: the stuffed Teddy and Pooh of childhood fantasy, the shambling, morose clown of the circus, the huckster and caricature of cartoons, the terrifying monster of the forest and Arctic ice, the prince of game animals, the grandmother in mythic kinship to humans, a constellation marking the passage of the night, the season and the cycle of life, a symbol of the Church, and a powerful spirit who mediates between man and a forest god. . . . The bear has represented fearful evil and, at other times, regenerative power. The bear is not only complex, but ambiguous and contradictory. In literature it is both smart and naive, forgiving and vicious. Here we may . . . glimpse a thousand centuries of a shared ecology, and scan its transformation in myth and literature. . . . When he crosses into "our" world, in what sense does he remain a bear? . . . When we see him as an old man in a furry coat and speak of him as "elder brother," do we falsify him or acknowledge a shared reality? (Shepard and Sanders xi)

*

My intention, at the start of this project, was to explore and trace the prominent influence of Native American culture on the literary representation of the bear and the bear's symbolic role in contemporary North American literature written by both Native and non-Native writers. In many respect this remains its aim. I have, however, slightly narrowed my perspective by exploring narratives that present the bear as teacher and in some cases a healer to protagonists. I will discuss the various, yet somehow similar, representations of the bear from an American perspective in Thomas Bangs Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" (1841), William Faulkner's "The Bear" (1942), Norman Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam?* (1967); from a Canadian perspective in Ernest Thompson Seton's *The Biography of a Grizzly* (1899), "Johnny Bear"(1900), and *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac* (1902), Charles G.D. Roberts' *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (1900), Marian Engel's *Bear* (1976); and from a Native American perspective in N. Scott Momaday's *The Ancient Child* (1989).

Drawing upon these texts and their similar representations of the bear, I will explore how and why the bear is viewed as a teacher in North American literature and also what the bear teaches human characters and readers. In my analysis I attempt to respond to the obvious queries: why a bear and how a teacher? In part, the answers can be found in the oftentimes contradictory influences of Anglo-European culture and Native American culture on North American people. The representation of the bear in North American literature combines a transplanted Anglo-European view, a view which largely objectifies the bear, and the Native belief in the bear as a supernatural being. In the narratives I discuss, the clashing of the two cultures is evident, whether expressly or by implication, in the representation of the bear's role.

Notwithstanding divergent cultural views of the bear, particularly between Native and Anglo-European peoples, as I will discuss, it has long been an animal people of diverse cultures have been both drawn to and terrified of. We have endowed the bear with symbolic significance as a means to understand its perplexities, and we have reflected our ambivalence towards it in literature. Most people lack a scientific understanding of bears. Thus, fiction, more often than scientific fact, has assigned the bear its characteristics and habits. Stories and science emanate from the same spirit of imaginative inquiry and observation of the unknown and are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Carl Jung suggested that it was man's propensity to transform unknowable objects into symbols that created art and religion (Jung 232). The extant evidence of prehistoric cave paintings and stories suggests that we have been thinking about, and telling stories about, bears for a very long time.

There is, in a sense, a shared "bear" culture. The bear, as noted by many critics, has long been featured in the mythology of many diverse cultures. Bjorn Kurten, writing of Ursus spelaeus, an extinct cave bear, noted that in one Austrian cave the fossil remains of 30,000 cave bears were found (60). How they all got there is a question that has appealed both to scientists and speculators, who prefer to imagine an ancient bear cult, rather than see this phenomenon as a reflection of the animal's instinctual funerary practices. Others have suggested that man and bear have shared the same caves and that both "the bear's signing marks and human hand prints in caves are widely recorded" (Shepard and Sanders 191).

Whether bear legends emanate from a singular culture, or from a singular response to the animal, is impossible to establish. There are interesting parallels to Joseph Campbell's claim of the unity of human culture. In his study of world mythology, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, Campbell proposed that there is a single

> unity of the race of man, not only in its biology but also in its spiritual history, which has everywhere unfolded in the manner of a single symphony, with its themes announced, developed, amplified and turned about, distorted, reasserted, and today, in a grand fortissimo of all sections sounding together, irresistibly advancing to some kind of mighty climax, out of which the next great movement will emerge. And I can see no reason why anyone should suppose that in the future the same motifs already heard will not be sounding still–in new relationships indeed, but ever the same motifs. (foreword)

Because of the ubiquity of bear myth, in *The Sacred Paw*, Shepard and Sanders have suggested that bear stories are perhaps the oldest myths of mankind:

> We see that in tracing the circumpolar traditions of the bear ceremonies, we transcend the usual opposition of European and Native American origins, and that of Asian versus European, because the metaphysical bear legends are a shared heritage, perhaps part of the oldest traditions of mankind. This modification of our history reflects also our new sense of the bear as more than an external being--as part of the deep reality of the human self. (71)

Support for this idea of a shared heritage is reflected in myth and language.

A similar phenomenon of unity is evident when we look at language. The English language has more than forty meanings for the verb "to bear." As Shepard and Sanders suggest, in the "long evolution of word meanings . . . the bear provide[s] the most compelling example or even concrete reality around which a concept was shaped by human thought . . . the figure of the bear looms in the history and prehistory of a large section of mankind" (xix). Other languages have special designations for the bear as well: "Most of the Indo-European languages share a root for 'bear'." Sanskrit directly links bear and star, both being the same word (Parulescu 95). The star referred to is the Big Dipper.

Ursa Major, the Big Dipper, was part not only of Greek mythology but also Native American mythology. In Greek mythology, Ursa Major and Minor, or Great and Little Bear, were named after Callisto and her son. Callisto, having been turned into a bear by the jealous god Hera who accused her of being unfaithful, was wandering in the woods when she met her son, who was out hunting. When she tried to approach her son to hug him, the young man drew his spear to kill her. The god Zeus, seeing the tragedy about to occur, snatched them both away and placed them in the sky as the constellations (Bulfinch 37-39). As did the ancient Greeks, many Native American tribes looked at this constellation and envisioned a bear. The story has been documented in numerous tribes of the Pacific Northwest and northern Rockies. In one Native version, a young Native woman is changed into a bear and has two sons (Barbeau 2). The constellation was "called the Bear over nearly the whole of our continent when the first Europeans, of whom we have knowledge, arrived. They were known as far north as Point Barrow, as far east as Nova Scotia, as far west as the Pacific Coast, and as far south as the Pueblos" (Hagar 92). From this "shared" culture, however, diverse symbolic values have emerged.

As reflected in Anglo-European literature, philosophy, science, and even sport, the bear had become symbolic of the base, uncivilized aspects of humanity. In medieval Europe animals were characterized artistically "for the purposes of pointing an ethical moral or Christian lesson" (Robin 15). According to Ansell Robin, the medieval Bestiaries, the texts most responsible for Anglo-European assumptions and views of animals prior to Darwin's theories of natural selection, used ideas about animals in three ways: "in description of their (real or supposed) form and habits; as types of character or disposition in analogy or contrast with human nature; as sources of simile or metaphor to illustrate the phases of human life and experience" (13). The concern of the writers was clearly not with the animals depicted, but with the moral edification of humanity.

The extant record of medieval European culture shows bears as symbols to represent and suggest negative aspects of man. Borrowed from Aristotle's *Natural History*, such usage was perpetuated throughout the medieval period. Aristotle had noted the following characteristics:

> Bears . . . do not copulate with the male mounting the back of the female, but with the female lying down under the male. The she-bear goes with young for thirty days. She brings forth sometimes one cub, sometimes two cubs, and most five. Of all animals the newly born cub of the she-bear is the smallest in proportion to the size of the mother; that is to say, it is larger than a mouse but smaller than a weasel. It is also smooth and blind, and its legs and most of its organs are as yet inarticulate. (908)

That the bear copulates like a human, yet unlike a human because it is an animal, was a source of endless and persistent myth throughout medieval Europe. This tradition, instead of stressing the animal's strength, as did some heraldry, such as King Arthur's, associated the bear more often with lust. The medieval church made this connection between the bear and lust unequivocally clear: "The bear typified fornication" (Rowland 33).

Numerous writers chose to stress the procreative aspect of the bear--the birth of the cub. Aristotle recorded that along with other animals, such as the viper and fox, the bear cub is "born a shapeless lump of flesh which the mother fashioned with her tongue" (Robin 26). This maternal licking is the genesis of the phrase "licked into shape." As a sow licked her cubs into form, so too did the artist give shape to his creations. In *Anatomy of Melancholy* Burton noted, "I must for that cause do my business myself, as a Bear doth with her whelps, to bring forth this confused lump; I had not time to lick it into form, as she doth her young ones" (qtd. in Robin 29). This symbolism, as I discuss in chapter six, is adopted by Engel in *Bear*.

Another Anglo-European cultural perspective of bears derives from the once popular "sport" of bear-baiting; this "sport" has worked its way into North American culture in the form of bear hunting. Long extinct in Britain, bears were kept in captivity in the Tower of London zoo for entertainment as far back as 1252 . At that time a "member of the Royal Household was appointed Master of the King's Bears and Apes" (George and Yapp 56). Bear-baiting was one of the favorite pastimes of medieval England (Strutt liii-iv). For this spectacle, a bear would be tied or chained to a tree, blinded, whipped, and then tormented to death by dogs. There were several bear-baiting rings in Chaucer's

England, but the first house dedicated solely to baiting animals, particularly bears, was built in the sixteenth century (Shepard and Sanders 156).

Evidence that bear-baiting was a rival of the English Renaissance theatre for spectator attention is found in law. An Act of the Privy Council in 1591 prohibited the performance of plays on Sundays, the Sabbath, and also on Thursdays, the day set aside for bear-baiting:

> Whereas heretofore there hath ben order taken to restraine the playinge of enterludes and playes on the Sabothe Daie, notwithstandinge the which (as wee are enformed), the same ys neglected to the prohanacion of this daie, and all other daies of the weeke in divers places the players doe use to recyte theire plaies to the greate hurte and destruction of the game of beare baytinge and lyke pastymes, which are maynteyned for the Majesty's pleasure yf occacion require. These shalbe therfore to require you not onlie to take order herafter that there maie no plaies, interludes or commodyes be used or publicklie made and shewed either on the Sondaie or on the Thursdaies because on the Thursdayes those other games usuallie have ben allwayes accustomed and practized. (Great Britain 324-25)

Is it any wonder that Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus* and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* depict such bloodshed when their rival was the spectacle of bear-baiting? The pastime of bear-baiting is one indication of the widely held belief in mankind's superiority over animals. In the modern hunt, particularly in Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam?*, killing a bear is a form of entertainment to the hunters.

European philosophical models tend to ignore the existence of animals. Animals, including bears, are seen as ridiculous in light of the humanist's view of life, a view that sees man as the pinnacle of God's creation. This rationale explains, in part, why the animals have always made "messes," as B. A. G. Fuller has noted (his pun), when it comes to philosophy:

> In any case the reason for our lack of theoretic and metaphysical interest in the other living and conscious inhabitants of our planet deserves some attention from man himself. We shall best discover the reason by asking ourselves what questions the animals raise in metaphysical theories constructed without consulting them. These are connected most closely with the problem of evil and that of the nature of the entity exercising and supporting life and consciousness. . . . Any thoroughgoing handling of the problem of evil must justify the ways of God, not only to man, but to all other sentient and suffering creatures. And no adequate theory of the nature, place, and destiny of consciousness in the real can be constructed that overlooks the fact that the lower animals as well as ourselves seem to possess it. (830)

Some philosophies, however, attempted to accommodate the existence of animals. In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the French believed in theriophily, or the happy beast tradition. "Theriophily is that the beasts . . . are more 'natural' than man, and *hence* man's superior" (Boas 1). Although theriophily was not a popular movement, George Boas, who has traced its origins back to the early Greek philosophers, concludes "that man has no right to set himself above the beasts, for although his spirit and intellect are livelier than theirs, he is subject to a myriad evils of which they are free" (59). The dominant philosophical views held by Europeans nonetheless perpetuated cruelty to bears and other animals. European philosophers, such as Descartes in the seventeenth century, thought animals were mere objects, incapable of feeling: "The beasts, he insisted, are entirely made of body-stuff and so they have no feelings and sensations. If beasts had minds, they would be immortal like us, which is absurd" (Cartmill 95).

These European attitudes towards animals and the natural world were transplanted to North America with the arrival of the first onslaught of immigrants. Here they believed they found an endless supply of wealth on a continent virtually uninhabited and uncivilized: "Uncultivated land meant uncultivated men . . . those who did not themselves subdue and cultivate the land had no right to prevent others from doing so" (Thomas 15). Keith Thomas in *Man and the Natural World* offers a cogent explanation of European attitudes towards the natural world between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. He asserts that the determining principle of this period in western history is the presumed precondition of man's ascendancy over the animal and vegetable world (16). Since Anglo Saxon times "the Christian Church in England had stood out against the worship of wells and rivers. The pagan divinities of grove, stream and mountain had been expelled, leaving them a disenchanted world, to be shaped, molded and dominated" (22).

That new American settlers brought their European attitudes with them is illustrated in early American tall tales, especially bear tales. James R. Masterson, who explored traveler tales recorded before the American Revolution, found that two ideas appear frequently in tales involving bears: bears are licked into shape and bears suck their paws.

> Two ancient lengends [sic] about bears, always a favorite subject of vulgar error, were transported to America. It

> was recorded by an Irish physician in North Carolina that when she-bears litter, their cubs 'seem to be at first a lump of white Flesh, void of Form, without Hair or Eyes, only there is some appearance of Claws. This rude lump they fashion by degrees, by their constant licking.' A second belief, that the bear suck their paws for nourishment, was soberly declared by the same doctor, a missionary in Texas, an officer and a trader in Canada. (51)

William Dobak noted another peculiar quality writers attributed to bears and commonly mentioned in their colonial frontier tales: bears often kill their prey by biting a hole into them and then blowing them up like a balloon. This remarkable ursine behavior, licking into shape, sucking paws and blowing as with a balloon, was "used to gull credulous newcomers. It represents an early stage of what later became a prominent strain in American folk humor" (Dobak 274). As I will explore in my first chapter, Thomas Bangs Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" is the best example of this strain of American bear-folk humor. His story also uses elements of Native Americans' respect for the bear.

To the Native tribes inhabiting the North American continent, animals, and particularly bears, had spirtual significance and were respected as living equals. Animals play an important role in Native American mythology and religion, as tricksters, creators of both the universe and man. Although numerous distinct tribes place disparate significance on different animals, there is a common respect for animals among Native groups. The reason for this respect, explains Joseph Epes Brown, writing about the spiritual beliefs of the Plains Indians, is that

> Animals were created before human beings, so that in their anteriority and divine origin they have a certain proximity to the Great Spirit . . . which demands respect and

> veneration. In them the Indian sees actual reflections of the qualities of the Great Spirit, which serve the same function as revealed scriptures in other religions. They are intermediaries or links between human beings and God. This explains not only why religious devotions may be directed to the deity through the animals, but it also helps us to understand why contact with or from the Great Spirit, comes almost exclusively through visions involving animal or other natural forms. (38)

To this I would add Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz who write that in "the Indian imagination there is no division between the animal and human sphere" (389).

Given the significance and distinction that Natives ascribe to animals, it is not surprising that animals appear frequently in the novels written by Native Americans. Peter G. Beidler, who has drawn attention to the conspicuous role animals play in Natives' novels, writes that "Indian novelists have tried to suggest that it is in the animal world that modern man must begin the search for meaningful place and peace in the twentieth century" (134), an idea which, I will show, has crept into non-Native literature as well. The Native writer Louise Erdrich, for example, includes the deer in *Love Medicine*; James Welsh uses birds in *The Death of Jim Loney* and the wolverine in *Fools Crow* to provide the central characters with vision; in Leslie Marmon Silko's novel, *Ceremony*, Tayo returns from war mentally tormented and alienated. To reintegrate into his Native community, he first must rid himself of the attitudes he adopted from the White man, for whom nature is dead and animals are mere objects, and then accept the Native view. Of the White man, Silko writes:

> *Then they grow away form the earth*
> *then they grow away from the sun*

then they grow away from the plants and animals
They see no life
When they look
they see only objects.
The world is a dead thing for them
the trees and rivers are not alive
the mountains and stones are not alive.
The deer and bear are objects
They see no life.
(135; emphasis in original)

The Euro-American attitude towards animals and nature is assumed, by Silko, to be apathetic, indifferent at best, and, more likely, disrespectful.

A homogenous attitude towards the bear in the customs and beliefs of numerous tribes has been noted by Irving Hallowell. Although each tribe that venerates the bear has its own cultural response to the animal, the most important similarity among tribes is that among Native hunters and those involved with the hunt, the bear is perceived as a supernatural being (Hallowell 2-22). The problem he saw was how to account for all the similarities:

> How, indeed, are we to account for such notable similarities in psychological attitude toward a particular animal over such an enormous extent of territory? Are we to believe that the human mind has everywhere reacted to the characteristics of the genus Ursus in a similar or even identical fashion, or are other factors of a different order responsible? (21)

Hallowell noted that the bear, unlike many animals involved in Indian mythology and religion, presents a different problem because it is involved so frequently as a symbol by all cultures, not just Native ones. Hallowell suggests that the only approach possible is to look at tribal culture on its own terms and not "deduced from any general principles of association. It is only as we comprehend specific cultures in terms of their own range of values and concrete expressions that the role of animals in their life and thought becomes intelligible" (Hallowell 18). Although many cultures ascribe symbolic value to the bear, the nature of the bear's symbolic value varies, as Hallowell notes. In the works I have chosen to discuss, this variance is evident in the divergence between the perception of the bear by Native Americans and the perception of the bear transplanted from Europe by early North American settlers.

The narratives I will be discussing illustrate a blending of European culture and Native culture; it is in the context of these blended cultures that nineteenth century non-Native American and Canadian bear stories were rendered. The bear, I will suggest, symbolically speaks in favor of creating (or retaining) a North American perspective of the bear (and nature) akin more to the Native than to the European perspective. The bear is, as Momaday characterizes it in *The Ancient Child*, "the mythic embodiment of wilderness" (n.p.), not only in his work, but in all the works I discuss. Under the bear's tutelage and with the bear's guidance, characters and readers are provided insight into the impact of mankind's actions on the natural world.

In chapter one I explore an early American human-bear encounter in "The Big Bear of Arkansas" by Thomas Bangs Thorpe, first published in *Spirit of the Times* on 27 Mar. 1841. Because of its immediate appeal, it became the feature story in a collection assembled by the editor of the *Spirit of the Times*, William Potter (Rickles 50). In the preface to this collection, Potter recognized that Thorpe's story ushered in what he called "a new vein of literature . . . reminiscen[t] of the pioneers of the far West--sketches of thrilling scenes and adventures" (Potter 7). Potter understood that Thorpe's story created and presented a new literary representation of the western frontiersman, hitherto only vaguely evident in the tales of Davy Crockett, whose tales typified the frontier spirit of America. This western character provided Thorpe "'the most significant meaning of America' because [Crockett] was an independent product of American and not European culture" (Rickles 178).

"The Big Bear of Arkansas" is one of the most influential American tall tales of the nineteenth century and is still frequently anthologized (Lemay 321). Richard Slotkin, a recent critic, has suggested that the publication of the story represents an important event in American literature. In *Regeneration Through Violence*, he writes that the story embodies a decisive split in American literature from the "Puritan and European tradition, in which the wilderness is a temptation to expression of the passions and consequent dissolution, [to] . . . its polar opposite, the Indian myth in which the quest of wilderness's beast is the source of creative power" (Slotkin 484). The beast that is the source of this creative power is a bear.

Thorpe's story initiates themes and perceptions of the bear later shared by two modern American writers, William Faulkner and Norman Mailer. Thorpe presents the bear hunter as a hero and the bear as a worthy and crafty adversary. More important, Thorpe's story suggests that the bear provides philosophical insight. Thorpe's representation of the bear is derived not only from a European tradition but from a Native American tradition as well.

In chapters two and three I will explore William Faulkner's "The Bear" and Norman Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam?* in which the central characters, Ike and D.J., are psychologically altered by their respective bear hunts. "The Bear" is structured around the pursuit of a particular bear who has eluded death for many years and, consequently, has become a legend to local hunters. Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" has long been recognized as an influential source of "The Bear." There are many similarities between the two stories, as the editors of *Bear, Man and God* have identified:

> Jim Doggett's 'greeness" in New Orleans resembles that of Boon in Memphis; there is a remarkable dog . . . the Bar is hunted for several years before the climax; the hunter is the hunted . . . Jim's gun fails and he helps his dog with a knife, as Boon does. (Utley, Bloom, and Kinney 149)

The most revealing correspondence between the two stories is the role of the bear. Carvell Collins notes that in "Thorpe, as in Faulkner, the hunted animal is extraordinarily large, competent, and mysterious. Its hunters, with varying intensity, see it as supernatural and an embodiment of larger principles" (96). The bear in both stories is a teacher. Thorpe's Jim brags of knowing about the habits of bears and "larning something every day" about them (24), and by the bear's death he learns humility. Isaac

McCaslin (Ike), the protagonist of "The Bear," learns from a bear too. He learns "the nobility of [his own] character" (O'Connor 126). Through the hunting ritual, the bear guides Ike to greater knowledge about himself and the environment he inhabits. "The Bear" has been seen as a representation of national concerns, and as an homage to the disappearing frontier of America. The bear, Old Ben, is a mythic symbol of the wilderness "mysteriously related to both god and man, carrying the seeds of both salvation and destruction" (Allen 153).

Conversely, in Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam?*, written in 1967, the innocence of the young hunter has been replaced by cynicism and contempt. *Why Are We In Vietnam?* is a bear-hunt story told by an eighteen-year-old narrator, stoned on marijuana, who calls himself D.J. because he thinks and talks like a disc jockey from Harlem. D.J. describes an Alaskan bear hunt he, his best friend Tex Hyde, his father, and two of his father's business associates made two years earlier. He reconstructs this hunt during a dinner party in his parents' mansion on the eve of his departure for the Vietnam war. The great white hunter has proved a greater force than nature and, consequently, he has stolen the bear's dignity. Nature is presented as hostile as it fights back against its destruction. The bear, the quarry of the hunt, attempts to bridge the chasm created between the hunters and nature.

Why Are We In Vietnam? has been called a parody of both William Faulkner's "The Bear" and, because of its outrageous language, the tall tale tradition of storytelling. D.J. in this regard has similarities with such other tall tale characters as Jim Doggett, Davy Crockett, and even young Ike and Boon from Faulkner's "The Bear." Ralph Maud calls *Why Are We In Vietnam?* a "gentle parody" of Faulkner's "The Bear," writing that "the killing of bear is no more satisfactory in Alaska than it was in Mississippi" (71). Richard Pearce perceives the story as a contemporary, parodic expression of the tall tale tradition. Pearce implies the parody when he says

> the bear hunt is a ritual expression of American virility, a channeling of sexual aggressiveness and the drive for status, which Mailer brilliantly satirizes. . . . The implied equivalents begin with the frontier value placed on physical, as opposed to intellectual prowess, and on craftsmanship. (411)

Both Ike and D.J. are initiated into the world of men through bear hunting, but for Ike the encounter is a hallowed experience, while for D.J. the hunt only justifies the cynical animosity he has for his parents. He sees the bear hunt as an example of all the ills and malignity his society has generated and of which he is constantly reminded by the bombardment of the "electronic air" (Mailer 5). Although critics have suggested that Mailer's novel is a parody of both Thorpe's and Faulkner's bear stories--a repetition with critical differences (Hutcheon 10)--the critical approaches to this novel have not seriously considered the implications of this parodic bear hunt and what the bear teaches to D.J.

The focus of my discussion shifts to selected Canadian works in chapters four, five, and six. American and Canadian representations of bears share some ground even though the context within which they appear is different. Margaret Atwood in *Survival* suggests that bears in American literature are presented as endowments of magic and symbolic qualities for hunters to assume when they kill. Citing as her references Faulkner's "The Bear" and Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* she notes that bears are symbols and not animals:

> They are Nature, mystery, challenge, otherness, what lies beyond Frontier: the hunter wishes to match himself against them, conquer them by killing them and assimilate their magic qualities, including their energy, violence and wildness, thus winning over Nature and enhancing his own stature. (74)

While often animals are presumed to have talisman-like "magic qualities," as Atwood suggests, the bear hunters are not, in my view, the recipients of their munificence. Canadian writers, James Polk notes, sympathetically identify with bears and not the hunters:

> Canadian bears are notably less spiritual and communicative, and it is not because Faulkner and Mailer may be 'better' or 'more serious' writers than Seton or Roberts; the difference is between the lives of the hunters and, to borrow a title from one of Seton's story collections, the lives of the hunted. (54)

Sympathetic identification with the hunted is sustained in Canadian animal stories even when the narrator is also a hunter (Polk 54).

In chapters four and five I explore, as Atwood refers to them, the progenitors of this shift in perspective, Ernest Thompson Seton and Sir Charles G. D. Roberts (73). Chronologically Roberts was the first to write animal stories (including the unusual, melodramatic novel, *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* (1900) involving a girl who loves and is nurtured by a bear), but gave up on this genre because of its lack of appeal to the reading public. His animal stories were rediscovered after the success of Seton's stories and Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Book.* Seton wrote three bear stories: *The Biography of a Grizzly* (1899), "Johnny Bear" (1900), and *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac,* which was first published in *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1902. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Seton's animal stories were immensely popular

Seton is responsible for popularizing a genre that attempts "to view life from the animal's perspective" (Anderson 95). Atwood has suggested that this genre is Canada's primary contribution to world literature (73). Trained as a painter, impassioned as a naturalist, Seton used his acumen to explore, speak, and write as an advocate for the natural world, most ardently for wild animals. His varied background and education have been cited by many critics as the sources of his unique outlook on animals and nature.

Seton's bear stories mark a philosophical and representational departure from the pattern found in the bear stories of Thorpe, Faulkner, and Mailer. Seton portrays the hunter-quarry relationship much differently: he sympathizes with the animal, not the hunter. Although hunting is still an aspect in his stories, the hunt is not the mechanism through which the human characters have contact with the bear. In

Seton's stories, and the other Canadian stories I will discuss, the bear figures more prominently as an individual, anthropomorphised character.

Interestingly, "Johnny Bear," which was first published in the December 1900 edition of *Scribner's Magazine* and quietly disregarded by critics, is one of Seton's most influential animal stories. The story is responsible for creating the ubiquitous "teddy bear." After hearing Seton tell the story, the graduating class of 1901 at Bryn Mawr College made Johnny their mascot. Consequently,

> one of the students, it is said, went to a toy shop in New York and asked manufacturer Morris Michton whether he could make a score of little woolly bears. The toymaker gladly accepted the proposition and soon found a ready market for the new product. The following summer, Teddy Roosevelt, by then president, went on his famous bear hunt in the Mississippi . . .[where he] refused to shoot a lame brown bear . . . [This was well publicized] and prompted Michton to name his toys "teddy bears." (Anderson 104)

"Johnny Bear" clearly exemplifies Seton's storytelling strategy, a strategy evident also in *The Biography of a Grizzly* and *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac*, and how it evokes his reader's sympathy and draws attention to the mistreatment of wild animals. Nowhere is this strategy more apparent than in the portrayal of Little Johnny as a crippled bear who, as I will discuss, is literally killed by well-intended human interference.

Charles G. D. Roberts' *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, the focus of chapter five, is not one of his famous nature stories. First published in 1900 as a serial in *Lippincott's Magazine* and later as a book, *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* is an odd narrative about an estranged wife, her whimsical child, Miranda, who has a guardian bear named Kroof, and young Dave, a hunter, a doctor (although not formally educated), and an unwanted suitor for Miranda. Kroof is an integral and pivotal character in the novel.

A possible influence on the representation of Kroof as a teacher exists in Rudyard Kipling's pedagogue bear Baloo, "the Teacher of the Law" (Kipling 22) in the *Jungle Book* (1894). Baloo instructs young Mowgli in how to survive in the jungle. Roberts, if indeed he was influenced by Kipling's story, only uses the situation of a bear teaching a human as a premise for further exploration of the human-bear relationship. *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* is essentially a *bildungsroman*, a novel of maturation, and is analogous to the feral child genre novel such as Kipling's *Jungle Book*; such novels depict entry into, residence in, and then departure from the wilderness.

Early criticism of *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* was, on the whole, laudatory and approving (Pomeroy 167). Many of the novel's first critics praised Roberts for his descriptive language and the design of the novel, but were reserved in their final judgment of the narrative. An anonymous critic in *The Times Literary Supplement* established the critical focus for discussion of the novel when he wrote in 1902, "[Roberts] is a poet at heart, and handles his fantastic and somewhat difficult theme with a skill and success that deserves unstinted praise. . . . The charm of the book is composite and a little difficult of analysis" (Rev.).

The criticism has since concerned itself with genre. Attempts have been made to categorize the novel, with the hope that an appropriate determination would clarify the issues presented in the novel and provide a methodology for analysis. In their attempts to classify the novel, critics have explored its composite, pastiche nature, pointing out how it uses elements from children's stories and the French Canadian tradition of the *Roman de la terre*, "novel of the land." In making each of these comparisons, the critics dwell on deficiencies in the novel and what the novel does not quite achieve, rather than explore what it presents. Shortcomings, deficiencies and faults are easy to find; our literary tastes have changed. Joseph Gold notes that there are many weaknesses in the presentation of the story in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood:* dialogue is weak, and "many themes . . . are woven together hurriedly and uncomfortably so that the whole fabric is coarse rather than smooth" (n.p.). Further, Gold, in the "Introduction" to the 1974 edition of *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, suggests that the novel is compelling entertainment, symbolically presented as a genuine Canadian myth:

> In this novel Roberts attempts to write of universal forces, love, innocence, exile, death and the impact on such human experience of the local, wild, frontier of eastern New Brunswick. . . . He does this by creating a fable and then transcends it by symbolically rendering his materials into a genuine Canadian myth. None of this is wholly successful but the result is so compelling and so odd, indeed, that it deserves our attention and is certain to engross and entertain us. (n.p.)

Adding to this perspective of the novel as symbolically important, Patricia Morely writes that it is a "symbolic romance, a fable, a prose-poem, in which the attitudes common to the early Canadian wilderness writers are revealed in a peculiarly luminous fashion" (347). What is revealed by the narrative is a new way of exploring the relationship between man and nature, a relationship portrayed by a girl and a bear.

In chapter six I explore Marian Engel's novel *Bear*, which draws from Seton's and Roberts' bear stories but illustrates a distinctly female approach to the representation of the bear. This approach closely resembles a Native American perspective. *Bear* finds its propinquity not with other realistic novels, such as *Heart of Darkness*, as S. A. Cowen has suggested (73), but rather with myths and fairy tales. *Bear* takes its premise, a woman loving a bear, from the realms of folklore and mythology--where it is imaginatively possible for a human to sexually love an animal. In this regard, "*Bear* is actually a very literary fantasy" (Howells 112) that realistically portrays events. The quality of this paradoxical effect, note Aritha van Herk and Diana Palting, is that "[b]ecause [Engel] comes to an understanding of the magical quality of even common things, we are moved into a physical and emotional world that is fantastic, but plausible, a world that presents a definite alternative to our carefully structured and restrictive preconceptions" (13). What Lou learns through her intimate interactions with Bear is to strip away her preconceptions and reliance on fact and to rely instead on her intuition and instinct.

Bear is not a folktale; however, Lou's actions reveal symbolic meaning, as well as stress the clarity of her experience. In an unpublished journal (housed at McMaster University) called "Bear Summer," Marian Engel writes that a "book must be all events and su[r]faces [sic]. The wisdom is in the adventure" (19). Exploring the surface is a cue to understanding the significance of the events and the adventure that are so explicitly depicted in the novel. The adventure is her unusual sexual relationship with the bear, and what is revealed to her, as was the case with Miranda, is her humanity.

N. Scott Momaday's *The Ancient Child* (1989), the last narrative I will explore, uses the bear in a fashion different from the others I will discuss. The function of the bear in Momaday's writing is both personal and spiritual, because of its part in a Kiowa legend called Devil's Tower. The bear is symbolic for the sacred relationship between the Kiowa and the wilderness; as Momaday notes in *The Ancient Child*, the bear is "the mythic embodiment of wilderness" (n.p.). *The Ancient Child*, the story of Lock Setman's transformation into a bear, is Momaday's retelling of the legend of Devil's Tower.

Momaday intentionally repeats ideas, themes and stories in his writing. In *The Ancient Child*, he reuses "The Strange and True Story of My Life with Billy the Kid" and the Kiowa legend of Devil's Tower and, he reestablishes the importance of the bear stories he began in *House Made of Dawn*. Critics have cited this predilection towards repetition as part of the Native oral tradition manifesting itself in written literature. Penny Petrone proposes that oral traditions are not static, that their "strength lies in their ability to survive through the power of tribal memory and to renew themselves by incorporating new elements" (Petrone 17). When asked in an interview why he repeats stories and themes, Momaday replied: "It's simply the way I work. I like to build upon things and carry them on. Because I'm writing basically one story, I carry it on from book to book. There's a continuum. That continuity seems very valuable to me" (Woodward 132).

It is the valuable continuity in the representation of the bear as an instructive "mythic embodiment of wilderness" not only in Native but also in non-Native (American and Canadian) literatures that interests me and that forms the central focus of my discussion and exploration of these selected works.

CHAPTER ONE

SENSING THE QUARRY: RECOGNITION OF THE SENSATE BEAR IN THOMAS BANGS THORPE'S "THE BIG BEAR OF ARKANSAS"

In Thomas Bangs Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" (1841) the idea that the bear is not merely the insensate quarry of the hunt but a being worthy of the hunter's respect and admiration is seen for the first time in American literature. In the process of telling his story, and, presumably, hunting this bear, Jim Doggett matures from seeing the bear as an object to be conquered to revering it and learning from it. Thus, attitude shifts towards and approximates views of the bear held by several Native American tribes for whom the bear is part of spiritual traditions and, as David Rockwell points out, a religious symbol that transcends objective reality (6).

In "The Big Bear of Arkansas" and other works that I will discuss in later chapters, the bear teaches humans to respect and to live harmoniously with the wilderness. One extraordinary bear takes on this role in Thorpe's story and, through a series of encounters with him, enlightens Jim Doggett. Jim's attitude towards bears, and by implication nature, changes as a result of his interaction with "the greatest bar . . . that ever lived" (23).

Thorpe's character, Jim Doggett, is a new literary representation of the popular western frontiersman, typified by Davy Crockett, whose stories and personality embodied the frontier spirit of America. To Crockett and the society he represented, the bear was a nuisance, a hindrance, and a symbol of the inevitable dangers awaiting colonial settlers on their western expansion. Settlers perceived the bear as "a hunter of men, a demonic brute with a thirst for human blood" (Gelo 142) and did not differentiate between species of bears. They were all potentially man-eating demons hiding in the woods. Men like Crockett were seen as making the west safe by killing bears (and killing Indians). Crockett's goal, to conquer and tame the wilderness, was achieved in part by killing bears.

Crockett was a national hero who became an American congressman. As Richard Slotkin has suggested, he defined "national aspirations in terms of so many bears destroyed" (5). Bear killing paved his way into government and provided the notoriety and name recognition necessary for a successful political career. As his prowess as a bear hunter grew, so did his popularity: "Bear killing was the allegorical measure of Davy Crockett's progress on the frontier, and by pushing westward he somehow arrived in Washington, D.C." (Gelo 145).

Crockett's bear-hunting yarns, recounted in his autobiography, embody a pattern adapted by Thorpe: an honest and open-minded narrator, speaking the idiom of the backwoods, tells a story in which he boasts about a hero who "confronts an archetypal, dangerous, manlike adversary, as threatening as Grendel in *Beowulf*" (Hauck 34). In chapters 12 through 15 of his autobiography, *A Narrative of the Life of David Crockett*, Crockett describes one prodigious bear-hunting year during which he hunted bears for four days without rest and claims seeing "in and about the biggest bear that ever was seen in America" (163): "It was the second largest I ever saw [sic]" (164). Crockett says, "I took a notion to hunt a little more, and in about one month I killed forty-seven more, which made one hundred and five bears I had killed in less than one year from that time" (194).

Thorpe's story is rendered against the background of Crockett's frontier mentality of braggadocio and annihilation. Even the sound of the name of Thorpe's hunter, Jim Doggett, echoes Crockett's name. However, Thorpe's frontier hero is not a self-aggrandizing bear hunter like Crockett. During the process of telling his story to the frame narrator, Jim comes to realize that the bear is not just a varmint (a disparaging term that denotes an animal as noxious or objectionable); it is an animal worthy of a hunter's respect, an animal Jim comes to love "like a brother" (27). This perspective of the animal echoes a Native point of view, brotherhood with the hunted animal. What distinguishes Thorpe's perception and representation of the bear from Crockett's is that the bear, at the end of the story, does not simply exist as a monstrous obstacle to human settlement. Doggett changes his perception of the bear during the process of the bear-hunt and comes, as Crockett never does, to learn from and admire the bear. This change he communicates to both the frame narrator and the reader.

"The Big Bear of Arkansas" uses the conventional frame device of the tall tale genre in which an implied author or frame narrator, a literate gentleman, "describes in realistic detail a scene which he claims to have witnessed on a riverboat, in a storefront, or around a campfire, and sets the stage for a second narrator who then spins a tall tale" (Carolyn Brown 63). The frame narrator of "The Big Bear of Arkansas" opens the first part of the story reporting events as they unfold to him on a Mississippi riverboat. At first, he chooses not to interact with the other passengers because he plans to be on the boat only a short while.

In order to illustrate the power of the bear over Jim and his account of hunting it, Thorpe shows the frame narrator becoming more fascinated by Jim's stories. Although at first aloof and uninvolved, he is drawn towards Jim Doggett and his stories (as was Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Wedding-Guest, who is held by the Ancient Mariner's "glittering eye" in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" [I,13]). Jim's "eyes were as sparkling as diamonds" and his bear stories just as attractive as his eyes (16). The frame narrator himself notes that "half of [Jim's] story consisted in his excellent way of telling it . . . the happy manner he had of emphasizing the prominent parts" (23). He marvels at Jim's ability to "ramble on from one thing to another with a volubility perfectly astonishing" (22). He is enthralled by Jim's stories and, even though he had planned to remain uninvolved, asks to hear of "some particular bear hunt" (23).

The pattern of the stories he hears Jim tell is consistent throughout the first part of Thorpe's narrative, but changes when he begins his rendition of the "particular bear hunt" (23).

When the frame narrator interjects asking Jim to tell a story, his expectation is that it will be like the others Jim has told. Whether he is talking about a wild turkey weighing forty pounds, mosquitoes not "much above noticing as alligators," or his dog Bowie Knife, who, Jim says, was blessed to hunt bears, "ordained to go together as naturally as Squire Jones says a man and woman is" (19), Jim tries to surpass himself with every exaggeration. At the beginning of the second part of the story, the narrator and the reader expect Jim to continue embellishing the recounts. The colorful language and exaggerations remain, but Jim, the hunter, and his relationship with his quarry change. The second part of Thorpe's story tells of Jim's hunt for the "greatest bar . . . that ever lived, *none excepted*" (23).

As he tells his story, he goes through a metamorphosis (of sorts) from a boastful hunter "whose confidence in himself was irresistibly droll" (16), as the frame narrator points out, to a man humiliated by "an unhuntable bar . . . [who] died when his time come" (31). This change in Jim occurs in three stages: first, when Jim comes to know of and believe in the bear's existence; second, when Jim, in two encounters, unsuccessfully attempts to kill the bear (and in the process the bear becomes the "hunter" and Jim the quarry); and, finally, when Jim kills the bear, but not as he had planned. The hunt for this bear does not conform to Jim's expectations of bears and bear hunting; because it is unpredictable, it erodes his arrogant confidence and, eventually, his pride. Through this series of encounters with the bear, Jim begins to respect and revere the bear and, for a moment at least, becomes "of the wood" (31), part of the natural environment to which the bear belongs.

Prior to this particular bear hunt, Jim had considered himself an authoritative bear hunter. He begins his story by highlighting his hunting prowess and the way in which he learned all there was to know about bear hunting. At length, he was "reckoned a buster," the best bear hunter in the district--"a reputation harder to earn than to be reckoned first man in Congress" (24), a reputation that implies he is a better hunter than Davy Crockett. He was so skilled, and the hunting so routine, that he had become complacent. Hunting bears presented no challenge: "I walk into the varmints . . . and it has become about as much the same to me as drinking" (24). It had become tedious and predictable: "It is told in two sentences--a bar is started, and he is killed. The thing is somewhat monotonous now" (25). By contrast, the hunt he is about to relate, he tells the frame narrator, took "two to three years" (23). Jim inflates himself and his past life as a hunter not only to stress the differences in this one particular hunt for "the bar," a bear unlike any bear he had encountered before, but also to deflect the suggestion that he is an inept hunter.

Throughout the first part of the narrative Jim's stories are preposterous. His bear hunting stories exemplify his attitude that the bear exists simply for the sporting amusement of him and his dog:

> And then the way I hunt them--the old black rascals know the crack of my gun as well as they know a pig's squealing. . . . That gun of mine is a perfect epidemic among bar . . . and then that dog--whew! why the fellow thinks the world is full of bar, he finds them so easy. . . . I never could tell whether he was made expressly to hunt bar, or whether bar was made expressly for him to hunt. (18-19)

Jim's superior attitude is patent. The bear is of no importance or consequence other than as quarry. It "was made expressly for [his dog] to hunt." When Jim tells a story about "an old he fellow on the stretch" who ran so fast and so long that when he was shot a column of steam came out of him, a foreigner laughs. And others claim "our Arkansas friend's stories 'smelt rather tall'" (22). Jim's exaggerated claims provoke all who listen to interject and to express their incredulousness, but also to enjoy the stories' amusing qualities. Thorpe emphasizes the uniqueness of this one bear hunt by illustrating how it differs from previous hunts.

Thorpe also sets up Jim's encounters with "the bar" by delineating the extent and depth of Jim's knowledge of bears. Before describing his encounters with "the bar," Jim claims he had learned everything and knew everything a hunter needs to know about bears: "I know just how much they will run, where they will tire, how much they will growl, and what a thundering time I will have in getting them home . . . I know the signs so well. Stranger, I'm certain" (25). He had learned how to tell "the length of the bar to an inch" (24) by looking at the claw marks on the sassafras trees. Jim takes a great deal of pride in his ability to measure bear heights: "I swelled up considerable--I've been a prouder man ever since" (24). Into Jim's ordered, predictable hunting domain comes this "unhuntable bar" (31).

The first step in the change comes with Jim's acceptance that the bear exists. When he first learns of "the bar," he has no way of reconciling it with his knowledge; indeed, initially he cannot accept that it exists. His convictions are tested when he uses his claw marking test. He thinks the bear's markings are a hoax because they are so high on the tree: "them marks is a hoax . . . I couldn't believe it was real" (25). However, after he continues to encounter the same marks high in the trees, "I knew the thing lived. That conviction came home to my soul like an earthquake" (25). Accepting that the bear exists anticipates the events which follow, events that unsettle his beliefs as a hunter. As Jim says, "'here is something a-purpose for me: that bar is mine, or I give up the hunting business'" (25). Ironically, the bear's purpose, contrary to Jim's assumption, is not to provide the ultimate hunting challenge, but to overturn his conception of hunting and, by implication, his conception of the wilderness.

Notwithstanding Jim's recognition that this bear exists, the language he uses to describe it at first suggests that his attitude has not yet changed. Although Jim recognizes that this bear is different (larger), it is still referred to as a "rascal," a "critter." At the beginning of the story, bears are described by Jim as "varmint" or as food for the hunter, "bar-ham and bar-sausages" (21). Although Jim is now prepared to accept the fact that this bear that he has not yet seen exists, he assumes that, other than its uncommon size, this is an ordinary, predictable, huntable bear, which it is not.

Jim's re-education begins with his first encounter with the bear. The first time he attempts to kill it, events do not go as expected. He expects the bear to run, but to be easily caught, to be "started, and . . . killed" (25). He chases, but the bear outruns him, his horse, and his dogs: "the dogs run him over eighteen miles and broke down, my horse gave out, and I was as nearly used up as a man can be" (26). This bear's behavior does not comply with Jim's understanding of bears. He begins to perceive it in a new way. He tells the frame narrator that

> Before this adventure, such things were unknown to me as possible; but, strange as it was, that bar got me used to it before I was done with him; for he got so at last, that he would leave me on a long chase *quite easy.* How he did it, I never could understand. That a bar runs at all, is puzzling; but how this one could tire down and bust up a pack of hounds and a horse . . . was past my understanding. (26)

What is puzzling and beyond his understanding is the bear's behavior.

It is the bear, and not Jim, that leads the hunt from this point onwards in the story. The roles of the hunter and the hunted are reversed as a result of this first encounter. As Jim recounts, "I would see that bar in every thing I did,—*he hunted me*, and that, too, like a devil, which I began to think he was" (26). Although "devil" is a negative Christian term, and used to suggest evil, capricious attributes of the bear, its use also marks a shift toward viewing the animal as sentient and recognizing that the bear is more than an object.

The first change Jim experiences is physical, similar to that later experienced by Set, in *The Ancient Child,* when he first becomes aware of the bear. As Jim becomes obsessed with the bear, as Ahab does with the whale in *Moby Dick,* it takes "hold of [his] vitals, and [he] wasted away. The thing had been carried too far, and it reduced [him] in flesh faster than an ager" (26). The more he considers the bear and its ability to outmaneuver him and his dogs, the more he suffers physically.

Jim's attitude changes further as a result of his second encounter with the bear. He begins to see himself as being like a bear and to see the bear as being more like himself. The chase begins as expected, but the bear is neither upset nor threatened by the pack of dogs: "[h]e did not care to get out of [the dogs'] way" (27). The bear's lackadaisical demeanor and indifference towards being pursued--"there he sat eyeing them as quiet as a pond in low water" (27)--are contrasted with Jim's behavior, which has become agitated. This behavior is uncharacteristic of the skilled hunter he has portrayed himself to be. Jim's second attempt to kill this bear goes all wrong. A hunting companion shoots the bear, wounding it, infuriating it. This shot, however, has the same impact on both Jim and the bear: "that bar was wrath all over" (27) and, like the bear, Jim's "wrath was up" (28). Although he expects the bear to attack the dogs, instead it runs off to an island, with Jim and his dog, Bowie Knife, in pursuit. Convinced he has killed the bear and determined to have the body, he cuts a grape vine and jumps into the water. But what he discovers is a "she bar, and not the old critter" (29). He has killed the wrong bear, much to the delight of his neighbors. Jim's confidence and pride as a hunter are completely undermined as friends begin to humiliate and taunt him about his hunting incompetence. Jim grows as "cross as a bar with two cubs and a sore tail" (29). The role reversal is fully evident when Jim shamefully admits that "the thing was killing me. The entire team of Arkansas in bar-hunting, acknowledged himself used up" (28).

As Jim begins to revere the bear because he cannot kill it, he comes to think of it not as an adversary but as a kinsman. He says, "wasn't he a beauty though? I loved him like a brother" (27). The bear is variously described in human terms, like a lady stepping "from a carriage" (27) and as an "old villain" (29). The shift in the language used to describe the bear and Jim's reaction to it are indicative of the change in Jim's attitude toward the bear, from thinking himself superior to it, to finding himself equal to it.

The bear's death during Jim's third and final encounter with it completes the shift in Jim's attitude from that of a self-aggrandizing man intent upon conquering nature to that of a more humbled man who has to come to recognize the power and majesty of the bear and his inability to conquer it. Fed up with missing this bear, Jim, with rhetorical bravado, names the day when he is going to kill the bear: "on Monday morning . . . I would start THAT BAR" (30), and he tells his neighbors to divide up his possessions if he does not succeed. However, the opportunity to execute his planned hunt does not arise. "On the morning previous to the great day of [his] hunting expedition," the bear appears while he is in the woods for his "habit" (as he calls his morning constitutional). The bear "starts" him, coming to him as he is defecating rather than preparing his gun for the kill. Jim makes the fatal shot, but is "tripped up by [his] inexpressibles, which either from habit, or the excitement of the moment, were about [his] heels" (30). In this final "hunt" that he relates to the narrator, Jim is not an extraordinary hunter, a "buster," but a man in a belittled position, caught with his pants down at the crucial moment of the hunt, inadvertently humbling himself in front of the bear (this position we will see evoked later in Marian Engel's *Bear*).

The bear's death offers the final impetus for Jim's change. The bear presents itself to Jim without a chase. As he shoots, it "wheeled, gave a yell, and walked through the fence like a falling tree would through a cobweb" (30). The kill is devoid of conquest and the sense of triumph and satisfaction he had come to expect from a hunt. This bear's death teaches Jim that he does not know everything about the bear, despite his hunting experience. Jim says, "[t]here is something curious about it, I could never understand,--and I never was satisfied at his giving in so *easy at last*" (31).

That the dying bear is described as falling like a tree has prompted critics to view the story as a "symbol of the destruction of the wilderness and as the end of the American paradise" (Lemay 332). The progress into the pristine wilderness of America is detrimental and as unstoppable as the steamboat named "The Invincible," on which Jim tells his story. I disagree. The bear and the wilderness it inhabits are invincible. It is the bear that chooses to die at this moment and in this manner, as Jim recognizes when he acknowledges that "that bar was an *unhuntable bar, and died when his time come*" (31; emphasis in orginal).

Lemay's pessimistic view that the bear's death symbolizes the destruction of the wilderness does not take into account the humor of the story or acknowledge that the bear is also a source of creative power, as Richard Slotkin has suggested. The American frontier folklore that Thorpe is using is the tall tale, "comic fiction disguised as fact" (Carolyn Brown 1-2). In order to emphasize the hunt's importance, Jim Doggett expands this bear hunt into epic dimensions as a struggle between man and bear. The result of the struggle is that Jim perceives this bear in a new way.

The language used to describe the bear in its last moments signifies this development in Jim's perception of it. He describes the bear in supernatural terms as "black mist" (30), (elusive and supernatural, a will-o'-the-wisp, obscure to his understanding) and "a creation bar" (30). The last description evokes an earlier description of Arkansas as the "creation state" (17). His symbolic elevation of the bear from varmint to creation bear is indicative of the veneration he now has for the bear. In addition, the elevation of the bear enables Jim to accept his own failings as a hunter.

Critics have largely overlooked the significance of this hunt. I see the hunt as marking a shift from an Euro-American perspective that man is superior to and can control nature, to a more Native perspective of reverence for, compatibility with, and equality between man and nature. The importance of the bear and its death has received varied critical interpretation, from Jim's failure to understand the "spiritual and moral blindness" of his experience (Schmitz 487) to the idea that he is now faced with the "implications of his and the Big Bear's mortality" (Petry 27). Others see Jim in a state of confusion, bewildered by his own lie (Blair 435). However, Slotkin has suggested that the bear is given equal status with man; to this view I would add that the equality accords with Native Americans' conception of the bear. Jim, according to Slotkin,

> learns the limits of his powers in the struggle, [and] comes to respect and love the strength that nature's avatar embodies, and will play out his proper role with all the appropriate means at his disposal--not in contempt but in love and respect, not in the expectation of success but with resignation to failure. (484)

Jim realizes that he is not an omnipotent hunter and that the bear is an equal or perhaps even a superior adversary: "[I]f it had lived in Samson's time, and had met him, in a fair fight, it would have licked him in the twinkling of dice-box" (30-1).

The scope of the bear's impact goes beyond a new-found respect for this particular bear. Humbled and silenced by the experience, Jim gains, at least for a moment, a new relationship with the wilderness. As the frame narrator observes at the conclusion of Jim's story:

> When the story ended, our hero sat some minutes with his auditors in a grave silence; I saw there was a mystery to him connected with the bear whose death he had just related, that had evidently made a strong impression on his mind. It was also evident that there was some superstitious awe connected with the affair,--a feeling common with all "children of the wood," when they meet with any thing out of their everyday experience. (31)

At the end of his story, Jim is momentarily silenced; gone is the bravado. His silence sharply contrasts with his earlier ability to "ramble on from one thing to another with a volubility perfectly astonishing" (22). The silence provides a moment of reverence for the bear that had finally won his respect. Jim acquired a "mystery to him connected to the bear whose death he had just related" and whose death "evidently made a strong impression in his mind." Jim's swollen-headed, superior attitude has given way to a quiet, humble reverence, which is described as "some superstitious awe connected with the affair" (31). His new attitude, by being described as a "feeling common with 'all children of the wood'" (31), signifies his transition from superior to the wood to part of it, a transition he recognizes but does not comprehend.

Through this series of encounters, the bear has taught Jim not to take the bear, and by implication, nature, for granted. Instead of confirming his skill as a bear hunter, his story does just the opposite: it illustrates his inability to conquer nature; in his effort to kill the bear, Jim is humbled. Thorpe portrays his hunter and the bear in a relationship similar to that held by many Native Americans, who "believed it was dishonorable to boast about killing an animal. The animal made a gift of its life. For a hunter openly to take credit denied that gift and violated his union with the animal's spirit" (Rockwell 36). In the end, Jim takes no credit for killing the bear, which "died when his time come" (31); instead, he gains a new respect for the wilderness.

The role that the bear plays in Jim's transformation may be a result of the influence of Native beliefs on Thorpe's thinking. Throughout his career, Thorpe was interested in Native attitudes towards bears. He published a sketch and an essay about bears near the time he was making minor revisions to "The Big Bear of Arkansas." *The Mysteries of the Backwoods* (published in 1845, at the same time as Potter's anthology featuring "The Big Bear of Arkansas") contained a sketch called "Grizzly Bear Hunt." In 1855, when Thorpe was revising "The Big Bear of Arkansas" for a collection of his work, he published "Bears and Bear-Hunting," an essay on bears, in *Harper's.* In both of these works he contrasts Euro-American and Native concepts of hunters and bears; because he wrote these works after "The Big Bear of Arkansas" their representations of the bear imply a continuation of the beliefs he portrays in it.

In "Bears and Bear-Hunting," Thorpe, deriding European and Native customs, creates his American portrait of bears. On a boat trip up the Mississippi River, each member of a hunting party interviewed by Thorpe relates a bear hunt. One particular story stands out because of its ridiculousness and its source. What is important in this portrayal is not that the teller's attitude is biased, as the following passage reveals, but that the source appears to be Native American:

> We have alluded to the unsociability of the bear; but it should be stated that there are occasionally times when they have their friendly gatherings, and assemble from all the surrounding country to exchange ideas, cultivate short-lived friendships, and have one grand jubilee. The Indians describe these meetings with becoming gravity, and ascribe to them all the intellectual character and importance which they give their own 'talks'. The antics of the bear on these occasions are represented as exceedingly amusing; the young cubs are displayed before the visitors with due ceremony, their anxious mothers evidently very proud of their shining coats of black hair and promising strength. They are taken up and dandled with all care, and rocked to and fro, and also, for waywardness, have their ears severely boxed, and are otherwise disciplined into juvenile obedience. On the occasion of the grand dances, an obscure thicket is selected, the grass is beaten down, and protruding roots torn away. The old bears then form a circle, generally sitting upon their haunches, assuming most solemn and critical expressions. The performer meanwhile goes through his pantomime of bowing and prancing, evidently anxious to secure applause; presently a partner volunteers, and an old-fashion minuet follows. The spectators the while keep time with their paws, and give no mean imitations of 'patting Juba'; and warming with the excitement, they will all suddenly spring up and join in a general double-shuffle, the award of superiority being given to the last who, from inclination or positive exhaustion, quits the field. It is from these 'backwoods assemblies' that the Indians profess to have learned their most difficult steps and most complicated dances; and to be able to perform like a bear is with them a compliment always desired, but one they seldom have the vanity to believe they truly deserve. (597)

The tone in this excerpt is obviously intended to be humorous and, as a result, disrespectful of the seriousness of the bear dance to the Native tribe Thorpe had in mind. Portraying an assembly of bears dancing a minuet waltz, he ludicrously misrepresents

Native mythology and, moreover, ascribes cultural inferiority to Native customs. At the same time he pokes fun at European society as he combines and substitutes bears for cultivated members of society, whose social customs appear grossly out of place in the backwoods of America. This passage evinces Thorpe's awareness of and interest in Native reverence for the bear, even if he, like Jim Doggett before his encounter, cannot comprehend such reverence.

To the Native American, writes Thorpe in "Grizzly Bear Hunt," telling stories of bears commands the undivided attention of the listeners:

> on such occasions, the old brave will sometimes relax from his natural gravity, and grow loquacious over his chequered life. But no recital commands such undivided attention as the adventures with the grizzly bear; and the death of an enemy on the war-path hardly vies with it in interest. (146)

Hunting for grizzly bears, Thorpe informs his readers, is one of the most dangerous pursuits because this bear is "seemingly insensible to pain, uncertain in its habits, and by its mighty strength able to overcome any living obstacle that comes within its reach, as an enemy" (145). Because of the danger involved, killing a bear is remarkable feat.

The sketch "Grizzly Bear Hunt" illuminates "The Big Bear of Arkansas" because it suggests that Thorpe was interested in Native Americans' attitudes towards bears and hunting. Thorpe mentions the Osage (who then lived in Missouri), but he goes on to say that the sketch is a generic account of bear hunting, without tribal distinctions; Thorpe says the hunter could be "the

Indian warrior, of any tribe" (145). Although he makes no tribal distinction in the sketch, he calls the Native "the hunter" and the non-Native "the sportsman."

Thorpe is careful to illustrate the difference between a hunter and a sportsman: "The hunter follows his object using his knowledge and instinct while the sportsman employs the instinct of domesticated animals to assist in his pursuit" (148). Bear hunting is dangerous because bears are "not animals which permit of a system in hunting them" (148). The hunter must rely on his knowledge of the forest and his instinct, not on his dog. Unlike the hunter, the sportsman has the tendency to exaggerate: "boasting and exaggeration are 'settlements'' weaknesses and not the products of the wild woods" (147). The hunter "surrounded by the magnificence and sublimity of an American forest, earning his bread by hardy adventures of the chase, meets with too much of the sublime and terrible in the scenes with which he is associated to be boastful of himself" (147). This response of the hunter to the wilderness differs from the response of Jim Doggett early in "The Big Bear of Arkansas" but resembles his response to the "bar" he later encounters.

The hunt in "The Big Bear of Arkansas" is not that of an Indian hunter, "surrounded by the magnificence and sublimity of an American forest, earning his bread by hardy adventures of the chase," (147) but of a sportsman at first. At the beginning of the story Jim's boasting about his accomplishments and those of Bowie Knife (Jim's need for a dog is further evidence that he is a sportsman) suggests a European outlook and approach to the bears he hunts. It is sport and nothing more. Talking about bears, telling stories about encountering them, is turned into a literary sport, where the outcome is assured: the hunter gets a trophy and a story; the teller gets a drink. But his attitude does change in the story to resemble Thorpe's view of a Native hunter (incomplete or inaccurate though it may be). That change is a consequence of what he is taught by the quarry of his hunt. Not only does Jim's attitude towards the bear change, but his storytelling methodology and purpose changes from "droll" to instructive.

Jim takes on the role of the bear, as the teacher, in an attempt to educate the frame narrator. In the process of setting up his story, Jim echoes the sentiments that the frame narrator invoked when he first gazed at the variety of characters on the boat, where "a man of observation need not lack for amusement or instruction in such a crowd, if he will take the trouble to read the great book of character so favorably opened before him" (14). Jim is pleased to tell a story of a particular bear hunt, and he compliments the narrator for his inquisitiveness:

> But in the first place stranger, let me say, I am pleased with you, because you ain't ashamed to gain information by asking, and listening, and that's what I say to Countess's pups every day when I'm home . . . because they are continually nosing about, and though they stick it sometimes in the wrong place, they gain experience anyhow, and may learn something useful to boot. (23)

With the audience engrossed, Jim is able to tell his story. He instructs the frame narrator on the vagaries of hunting and this one incredible, unhuntable bear so that he may "gain experience" and "learn something useful to boot."

Although the majority of the story's critics have mentioned the bear, none has explored the bear's role, even though it is Jim Doggett's response to the bear that demarcates, represents, and induces a new attitude towards wild animals in American literature. The bear is not rendered fierce merely in order to elevate the reputation and deftness of the hunter, as is often the case in hunting stories. Nor does the bear just represent the American wilderness, "against which the American hunter sees himself in a combative relationship" (Hoffman 232). Thorpe's presentation of the bear does initially incorporate prevailing nineteenth-century attitudes towards the animal exemplified by Davy Crockett in his autobiography. However, Thorpe also includes attitudes which have a distinct Native influence in which supernatural power and status are ascribed to the bear.

From this point on in American literature, the bear is represented not just as the quarry of the hunt and an obstruction to colonial expansion, but also as an animal that bestows power and status on the hunter who tells a bear story and tries to learn from the experience of the hunt. As I will discuss in relation to Faulkner's "The Bear" and Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, the vestiges of the bear's tall tale origin do not disappear, but the bear is no longer treated in the simplistic way it was by Crockett.

"The Big Bear of Arkansas" represents a high point of American frontier tall-tale adventures or what Bernard DeVoto has labeled the "big bear school of humor," by which he means writing that deals "with the American frontiersmen of the log cabin species" (DeVoto 1067). This school of writing could be extended to include such writers as Faulkner, who acknowledged Thorpe's story as an influence for "The Bear," and Norman Mailer, who parodies Faulkner in *Why Are We in Vietnam?.* However, as we shall see in analyzing these two later works, their authors modify the genre, adapting conventions to express their unique perspectives of the bear, the hunt, and the hunter.

CHAPTER TWO

NATURE'S TEACHER IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S "THE BEAR" : LEARNING RESPECT FOR THE WILDERNESS

William Faulkner's "The Bear," a chapter in his 1942 novel *Go Down, Moses*, extends many of the themes established in Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas." "The Bear" develops the symbolic role of the bear as nature's teacher, by focusing on a boy's maturation, and the two teachers who guide the boy through the process: Sam Fathers and Ben, the bear. Through his stories of Native customs and hunting, Sam teaches Ike to respect the bear and to learn from him, not by killing him, but by observing him in the wilderness. From Sam, Ike learns to respect nature; from observing Ben, he learns an even more important lesson: "Courage and honor and pride, and pity and love of justice and of liberty. They all touch the heart, and what the heart holds to becomes truth, as far as we know truth" (297).

Ike's initiation into the adult world of hunters is fully realized as a result of his relationship with Ben. Through the hunting ritual, Ike is guided by Ben to greater knowledge about himself and the environment he inhabits. However, critical analyses of "The Bear" ignore Ben's part in the narrative, focusing instead on Ike's initiation, the bear hunt, and Ike's repudiation of his hereditary land. Francis Lee Utley, in two editions of a case-book entitled *Bear, Man and God*, established the primacy of these three strands of the narrative when he characterized "The Bear" as a

> tall tale of an epic hunt for an immortal Hunted Bear . . . the realistic tale of how one boy is initiated into pride and humility, and the romantic tale of how that boy is prepared by his culture for one massive and courageous act of repudiation of a land tainted by slavery and miscegenation. (167)

The catalyst for each of these themes--the hunt, the initiation and the repudiation--is Ben, with whom Ike has several encounters, each of which marks a stage in Ike's maturation.

The bear's importance to Ike is initially established through storytelling, a method of imparting knowledge of the wilderness that is used not only by Faulkner, but also by Thorpe and in the stories I will be discussing in later chapters. Faulkner assumes a Native tradition of passing on knowledge where "[t]ribal elders transmitted traditions, customs, lore, and accumulated knowledge to the young orally" (Gibson 8). Unlike Thorpe, who had some knowledge of Native American culture, although he did not use it explicitly in his stories, Faulkner had little knowledge of Native American culture. The critic Elmo Howell writes that "[w]ith no experience to draw from and with his aversion to research, Faulkner makes no pretension to accuracy in his treatment of Indian life" (386). Even though he knows little of "Indian life" Faulkner ascribes to Sam Native wisdom, which is passed to Ike through stories.

Representing the contrasting Native and non-Native perspectives of the bear, the stories of Sam and Boon, the two most influential story tellers, reflect the conflicting values of the two cultures. Sam provides Ike, through his stories, with personal “Native” identity and knowledge of the wilderness and Ben. Boon's stories present a world similar to that of the sport-hunters in “The Big Bear of Arkansas” in which “the bar” is a crafty adversary to be killed and the dead bear a trophy. Hearing Boon tell his stories signals a departure by Ike from the world created by Sam, a world Ike associates with his childhood.

At the beginning of "The Bear" Ben is a character of legendary stature, a status that is shaped by Sam’s careful nurturing, in Ike's ten-year-old imagination. The bear “ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it. It loomed and towered in his dreams before he ever saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print, shaggy, tremendous, red-eyed, not malevolent but just big” (193). The bear Ike comes to know through the stories has extraordinary proportions. The bear “loomed” and “towered” and existed in an untouched, “unaxed” wilderness. The bear Ike imagines has strength, wisdom, and authority; it has avoided the onslaught of hunters and settlers. Because of these attributes, which have been created by Sam, and because Ike has not been taught, as Jim Doggett and D.J. in *Why Are We in Vietnam*? have been, that he is superior and the bear insensate, Ike is able to “listen” to what the bear has to “say.”

Central to the reader’s understanding of the bear’s role in Ike's maturation is an awareness of the relationship between Ike and Sam Fathers who is, as his name denotes, Ike’s mentor-father; it is Sam who prepares Ike for the ensuing bear encounters.

Consanguinity is not an important link binding people together, as Faulkner adds parenthetically:

> (Sam always referred to the boy's cousin as his father, establishing even before the boy's orphanhood did that relation between them not of the ward to his guardian and kinsman and chief and head of his blood, but of the child to the man who sired his flesh and his thinking too.) (174)

Creating an identity for Ike through stories he tells him, Sam infuses Ike's imagination with images of Sam's "People." Faulkner writes:

> The boy would just wait and then listen and Sam would begin, talking about the old days and the People whom he had not had time ever to know and so could not remember (he did not remember ever having seen his father's face), and in place of whom the other race into which his blood had run supplied him with no substitute. And as he talked about those old times and those dead and vanished men of another race from either that the boy knew, gradually to the boy those old times would cease to be old times and would become a part of the boy's present, not only as if they had happened yesterday but as if they were still happening, the men who walked through them actually walking in breath and air and casting an actual shadow on the earth they had not quitted. (171)

Ike absorbs Sam's Chickasaw heritage, "those old times and those dead and vanished men of another race," and it becomes his own. He makes it "a part of . . . [his] present." Through these stories Sam creates the context within which Ike first perceives the bear.

Faulkner steps outside the Chickasaw narrative he has used to describe Sam and Ike's relationship and creates another frame using Greek mythology for the bear:

> It was as if the boy had already divined what his senses and intellect had not encompassed yet: that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another

> in the land where the old bear had earned a name, and through which ran not even a mortal beast but an anachronism indomitable and invincible out of an old dead time, a phantom, epitome and apotheosis of the old wild life which the little puny humans swarmed and hacked at in a fury of abhorrence and fear like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;--the old bear, solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowered childless and absolved of mortality--old. Priam reft of his old wife and outlived all his sons. (193-94)

Faulkner analogizes the impersonal and futile destruction of the frontier wilderness with an aspect of Greek mythology. This use of both Native and non-Native references exemplifies the divergent cultural perspectives in North American fiction and perhaps his own limited knowledge of Native American perspectives of the bear. Further, his reference to Greek mythology may be an attempt to put the bear in a context accessible and understandable to non-Native readers. By comparing Ben, the old bear, to Priam, from Homer's *Iliad*, Faulkner suggests the bear is the last bastion of the legendary wilderness, the last of his kind, and dispossessed of his kingdom.

Ben is attributed legendary characteristics: he is "indomitable," "invincible," "a phantom," immortal and a god, an "apotheosis" of wildlife. He is all that remains of a wilderness eroded, "gnawed" and "hacked" at by little, "puny," "pygm[y]" men. Old Ben, the hunted bear, embodies, as Faulkner calls it, "wilderness' concordant generality" (328). This phrase anticipates Momaday's characterization of his bear in *The Ancient Child*, as "the mythic embodiment of the wilderness" (n.p.). In his vision Ike sees the wilderness and particularly old Ben as indomitable, and, at the same time, vulnerable, constantly challenged by "little puny humans." As a 10-year-old boy, Ike is able to be respectful and accept that the wilderness will always belong to the bear and that all of the gnawing, plowing, axing, swarming and hacking by hateful, fearful men cannot overcome nature's indomitable spirit as exemplified by and embodied in the bear.

Ike's early views of the bear and of the wilderness are shaped not only by Sam's stories but also by Sam's instructions and advice on the art of hunting:

> He taught the boy the woods, to hunt, when to shoot and when not to shoot, when to kill and when not to kill, and better, what to do with it afterward. Then he would talk to the boy. . . . The boy would never question him; Sam did not react to questions. The boy would just wait and listen and Sam would begin, talking about the old days and the People whom he had not had time to ever know and so could not remember. (170-71)

Ike learns that hunting is not simply making a kill, as it is for D.J. in Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*. Rather, the hunting lessons are focused on learning about the woods, when to and when not to shoot and kill, and primarily, "what to do with it afterward." Sam instills in Ike an appreciation for, and understanding of, the purpose of hunting. By interspersing hunting lessons with his stories about the "People," his Native ancestors, Sam further reinforces Native wisdom of respect for animals and the wilderness.

The most important hunting lesson, in which Sam teaches Ike not only how to hunt but how to be worthy of the hunt and how to respect the quarry and which Ike takes with him to the annual bear hunt, is portrayed in "The Old People," the chapter preceding "The Bear." "The Old People" describes the details of Sam and Ike's relationship and provides background information important to understanding "The Bear." "The Old People" begins when Ike has killed his first deer and Sam smears warm blood from the buck onto Ike's face. (Ike will not understand the importance of this act for almost sixty years, as we see later in "Delta Autumn"). Faulkner writes of the deer's death:

> They were the white boy, marked forever, and the old dark man sired on both sides by savage kings, who had marked him, whose bloody hands had merely formally consecrated him to that which, under the man's tutelage, he had already accepted, humbly and joyfully, with abnegation and with pride too; the hands, the touch, the first worthy blood which he had been found at last worthy to draw, joining him and the man forever, so that the man would continue to live past the boy's seventy years and then eighty years, long after the man himself had entered the earth as chiefs and kings entered it;--the child, not yet a man, whose grandfather had lived in the same country and in almost the same manner as the boy himself would grow up and to live, leaving his descendants in the land in his turn as his grandfather had done, and the old man past seventy whose grandfather had owned the land vanished from it now with all their kind, what of blood they left behind them running now in another race and for a while even in bondage and now drawing toward the end of its alien and irrevocable course, barren, since Sam Fathers had no children. (165)

To Sam, the deer was not killed for sport; the killing was a consecrated act of respect, as Faulkner writes, and the smearing of blood a sacred ceremony linking Sam, Ike, and the animal together. Sam uses the blood reverentially, simultaneously to dignify the act of killing and to confirm the bond between himself and young Ike. Sam's act of smearing the deer's warm blood onto his face forever distinguishes Ike among hunters: "Sam Fathers had marked him indeed, not as a mere hunter, but with something Sam had had in his turn of his vanished and forgotten people" (182). Having achieved this "mark," Ike is able to encounter the bear for the first time.

The first hunt does not focus on the Ike-bear relationship but on Ike's novice status. Faulkner writes emphatically that Ike is new to the world of men and the hunting camp:

> He entered his novitiate to the wilderness with Sam beside him as he had begun his apprenticeship in miniature to manhood after the rabbits and such with Sam beside him, the two of them wrapped in the damp, warm, negro-rank quilt while the wilderness closed behind his entrance as it had opened momentarily to accept him, opening before his advancement as it closed behind his progress, no fixed path the wagon followed but a channel non-existent ten yards ahead of it and ceasing to exist ten yards after it had passed, the wagon progressing not by its own volition but by attrition of their intact yet fluid circumambience, drowsing, earless, almost lightless. (195)

Ike's initiation is not alone; Sam is "beside him" as the wilderness opens, allows them in and closes behind them. Sam Fathers, unlike D.J.'s dad in *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, trains Ike to be a hunter who respects and is part of nature, not a sportsman who sees the natural world as sporting challenge, as something to be conquered. Faulkner's portrayal of the hunt differs from the representative interpretation of the hunting rite--he who gets the biggest, most elusive and dangerous beast is the most powerful hunter--as portrayed in "The Big Bear of Arkansas" and *Why Are We in Vietnam?*.

Before Ike's first actual encounter with Ben, Sam, for the last time, reinforces that Ben is in control of the hunt. Ben comes to the camp to see who is there. As he observes the camp, the contingent of hunters and dogs, Sam tells Ike:

> 'He dont care no more for bears than he does for dogs or men neither. He come to see who's here, who's new in camp this year, whether he can shoot or not, can stay or not. Whether we got the dog yet that can bay and hold him until a man gets there with a gun. Because he's the head bear. He's the man'. (198)

The colloquial language used to describe Ben in this passage evokes the human-like characteristics of Ben: "He's the man." He is anthropomorphically described as sentient, having feelings and judgment. Sam recognizes that Ben is in control, "he's the head bear," and he determines whether there is a hunter or dog in the camp capable and worthy of hunting him.

When Ike finally embarks on "the yearly pageant-rite" (194), the annual hunt for Ben, his own identity and his belief in the legendary bear, both molded by Sam's stories, are tested. Ike's arrival at the camp marks the first challenge he faces to the lessons and identity Sam has provided to him. Ike becomes aware that Ben is a mortal bear, perhaps capable of being destroyed:

> [H]e knew only that for the first time he realised that the bear which had run in his listening and loomed in his dreams since before he could remember and which therefore must have existed in the listening and the dreams of his cousin and Major de Spain and even old General Compson before they began to remember in their turn, was a mortal animal and that they had departed for the camp each November with no actual intention of slaying it, not because it could not be slain but because so far they had not actual hope of being able to. (200-01)

His recognition of Ben's mortality throws into question what Sam has taught him of the bear. The bear which had, through Sam's stories, "run in his listening and loomed in his dreams," was still alive not because of its immortality but because the hunters had not yet been able to kill it. Only by recognizing the bear's mortality and vulnerability will Ike be able to incorporate Sam's lessons into a way of life.

Ike's first bear hunt also contains the last of Sam's primary lessons. Although Sam has provided Ike with basic knowledge of life and the wilderness, to encourage Ike to understand and assimilate that knowledge, Sam sends the ten-year-old boy into the wilderness alone. In order for Ben to take over the education of Ike from Sam, Ike must seek the bear without Sam beside him. Reassuringly, Sam tells him not to be afraid:

> He would not even be afraid, not even in the moment when the fear would take him completely: blood, skin, bowels, bones, memory from the long time before it even became his memory--all save that thin clear quenchless lucidity which alone differed him from this bear and from all the other bears and bucks he would follow during almost seventy years, to which Sam had said: 'Be scared. You cant help that. But dont be afraid.' (207)

Ike's comments to himself suggest Sam's influence. With the knowledge learned from Sam that Ike and the bear are alike, Ike is able to assuage his fear. All that differs between him and Ben is "that thin clear quenchless lucidity," his capacity for cognitive, rational thought. Thus begins his search for a clear understanding of his own life and his role within the wilderness, as taught to him by Sam.

Ike's reaction to the bear when he sees it for the first time reveals a dichotomous perception of Ben as legend and mortal, a contradictory perception influenced by Sam's stories and those of the sport-hunters like Boon. And, notwithstanding Sam's careful guidance, Ike is still "tainted" (208) by conventional Euro-

American hunting wisdom. However, when Ike first views the bear, Faulkner suggests that Ike has not yet found the lucidity, the understanding of the bear, he searches for:

> It did not emerge, appear: it was just there, immobile, fixed in the green and windless noon's hot dappling, not as big as he had dreamed it but as big as he had expected, bigger, dimensionless against the dappled obscurity, looking at him. Then it moved. It crossed the glade without haste, walking for an instant into the sun's full glare and out of it, and stopped again and looked back at him across one shoulder. Then it was gone. It didn't walk into the woods. It faded, sank back into the wilderness without motion as he had watched a fish, a huge old bass, sink back into the dark depths of its pool and vanish without even any movement of its fins. (209)

Ben is "not as big," "but as big"; "immobile and fixed"; then it "moved"; "walking for an instant" and then "[i]t didn't walk"; it "did not emerge, appear," but left fading, sinking into the wilderness. To Ike, Ben is no determined size and no one color, existing, but not existing. Ike is caught between contradictory perceptions of the legendary bear of his imagination and the real, physical, mortal bear in front of him. It is only after Ike has, as Faulkner writes, "relinquished completely to it" and gone into the wilderness without a gun and compass--tokens of man's power--that he is able to see Ben.

Ike's first sight of Ben signals a transition between his teachers; he is moving from Sam to Ben. Sam teaches Ike not to be afraid of the wilderness, but to respect it. Old Ben will teach him to become a part of the wilderness:

> If Sam Fathers had been his mentor and the backyard rabbits and squirrels his kindergarten, then the wilderness the old bear ran was his college and the old male bear itself, so long unwifed and childless as to have

> become its own ungendered progenitor, was his alma mater. (210)

In his second encounter with Ben, in part 2, Ike is older and better able to reconcile the conflicting images he has of him. At thirteen, he is acknowledged as one of the best hunters in the camp and a "better woodsman than most grown men" (237). He no longer needs the tutelage and direct guidance of Sam. Finding Ben is easy for Ike now. He recognizes his deformed foot print. When he encounters Ben the second time he is not surprised. Hunting by himself, Ike senses the bear's presence:

> [I]t seemed to him that he was directly under the bear. He could smell it, strong and hot and rank. Sprawling, he looked up where it loomed and towered over him like a thunderclap. It was quite familiar, until he remembered: this was the way he had used to dream about it. (211)

Ike now experiences Ben in an acutely sensory way. Ben smelled "strong and hot and rank." The bear he saw "loomed and towered" and his size filled the space loudly "like a thunderclap." The extraordinary proportions of the bear are familiar to Ike, and he recognizes, in the bear's presence, the bear of his childhood dreams. He begins to reconcile the real bear with the legendary bear first introduced to him by Sam.

During this second encounter, Ike recognizes not only the extraordinary bear that had always been present in his imagination, but also the bear's vulnerability and his ability to influence the bear and the wilderness by his choices. This is a lesson which Sam could not impart alone. Ike could have killed Ben but he, like Sam, chooses not to: "'You've done seed him twice now, with a gun in your hands'," Sam said, "'This time you couldn't have missed him'." . . . "'Neither could you', he said, "'You had the gun. Why didn't you shoot him?'" (212). Although Ike does not yet fully understand, he is unable to kill Ben because there is no purpose, no reason to do so. Sam had given his lesson but is was Ike's choice, a willed decision, to act. He is unlike Jim Doggett who was unable to recognize that he had a choice--he only saw the choice after, and as a result of, the bear's death. The bear's sole purpose, according to Jim, was to provide a hunting challenge and Jim's purpose, as a hunter, was to kill the bear. Jim, at the fatal moment, was out of control, caught off guard with his pants down. Conversely Ike, at this moment, learns that his purpose is to be a skilled hunter and that a man with the ability to kill need not necessarily kill. Unlike Jim, Ike is in control, and only he, not the bear, has the ability to make a choice. This ability to make choices is all that distinguishes Ike from Ben.

Ike's perspective of the bear opposes the perspective of Boon, who is like Thorpe's "sportsman." Boon, although part Chickasaw, speaks differently of hunting Ben than does Sam. Boon has no memory of the "old people," and like Jim Doggett, Boon admires his dog, Lion, used to track Ben: "The boy watched . . . when Boon touched Lion's head and then knelt beside him, feeling the bones and muscles, the power. It was as if Lion were a woman--or perhaps Boon was the woman" (220). In part 3 when Ike, now the best hunter, and Boon are sent to Memphis to get more liquor for the hunters, Ike is exposed to a different attitude towards hunting and Ben. Boon's stories of Ben, unlike Sam's, are devoid of spiritual significance: "Sam was the chief, the prince; Boon, the plebeian, was his huntsman" (222). Boon secularizes the experience of hunting. His hunting stories are war stories, stories of victories and conquest, hard fought battles and heroes:

> Then in the warm caboose the boy slept again while Boon and the conductor and brakeman talked about Lion and Old Ben as people later would talk about Sullivan and Kilrain and, later still, about Dempsey and Tunney. Dozing, swaying as the springless caboose lurched and clattered, he would hear them still talking, about the shoats and calves Old Ben had killed and the cribs he had rifled and the traps and deadfalls he had wrecked and the lead he probably carried under his hide--Old Ben, the two-toed bear in a land where bears with trap-ruined feet had been called Two-Toe or ThreeToe or Cripple-Foot for fifty years, only Old Ben was an extra bear (the head bear, General Compson called him) and so had earned a name such as a human man could have worn and not been sorry. (230)

This passage illustrates the Euro-American point of view of the bear as adversary, a killer, a wrecker, and a pillager. Ben's notoriety in Boon's stories derived, not from his nobility, but from his ability to evade capture and continue his destruction of shoats, calves, and traps. Boon's perspective of the bear provides a striking, significant contrast to Sam's earlier perspective of the bear as the object of "the little puny humans [that] swarmed and hacked at in a fury of abhorrence and fear like pygmies about the ankles of a drowsing elephant;--the old bear, solitary, indomitable" (193-94). Faulkner contrasts Sam's view of humans as the adversary to Boon's view of the bear as the adversary and the sporting competition that had been evolved by hunters attempting to kill Ben, the most elusive adversary. Although he is in awe of Ben, Boon finds Ben a wily adversary, a challenge the wilderness has to offer man. Ike, on the other hand, associates

Ben with Sam who respects the bear as he did the deer in "The Old People."

Faulkner, by referring to the inevitability of Ike's initiation and maturation in tragic, dramatic terminology, links it with Ben's death:

> It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too. (226)

Faulkner in this passage echoes Sam's lessons--to be humble, to be worthy, and to respect nature. Faulkner has also set the stage for Ben's death.

Ben's death at Boon's hand marks the final phase of Ike's maturation. Boon kills Ben with a knife. Ike watches as the bear falls, unable to meet Boon's armed attack:

> This time the bear didn't strike him down. It caught the dog in both arms, almost loverlike, and they both went down. He was off the mule now. He drew back both hammers of the gun but he could see nothing but moiling spotted houndbodies until the bear surged up again. Boon was yelling something, he could not tell what; he could see Lion still clinging to the bear's throat and he saw the bear half erect, strike one of the hounds with one paw and hurl it five or six feet and then, rising and rising as though it would never stop, stand erect again and begin to rake at Lion's belly with its forepaws. Then Boon was running. The boy saw the gleam of the blade in his hand and watched him leap among the hounds, hurdling them, kicking them aside as he ran, and fling himself astride the bear as he had hurled himself onto the mule, his legs locked around the bear's belly, his left arm under the bear's throat where Lion clung, and the glint of the knife as it rose and fell . . . It didn't collapse, crumple. It fell all of a piece, as a tree falls, so that all three of them, man dog and bear, seemed to bounce once. (240-41)

The image is another allusion to Homer's *Iliad*, where the death of many soldiers is compared to the felling of a tree, and is characterized in the same detail. Homer's metaphor begins in Book 11 of the *Iliad* (236) and is sustained throughout the epic. The death of many Greek soldiers is described by Homer as "when an oak goes down or a white poplar" (343). The war itself is described as a "tumult [that] goes up from men who are cutting timber in the mountain valleys" (347). And further:

> As east wind and south wind fight it out with each other in the valleys of the mountain to shake the deep forest timber, oak tree and ash and the cornel with the delicate bark; these whip their wide-reaching branches against one another in inhuman noise, and the crash goes up from the splintering timber; so Trojans and Achaians springing against one another cut men down. (Homer 350-51)

In both Faulkner and Homer death is described as impersonal, yet the close, physical contact between adversaries implies intimacy. Unlike the impersonal relationship between the sportsman and his quarry, the killing of Ben is described as intimate, "lover-like." This intimacy negates Boon's perspective of the bear as an insensate object. It is, however, unlike the killing of the deer in the "Old People," which was a reverential act. Boon's object was to achieve the kill, which he meant to accomplish by use of his dog, but which, in the end, was accomplished in order to save the dog he loves.

Ben's death provides Ike with the lucidity he has been seeking and which is essential to his making the eventual choice to forego his inherited land. It is ironic in Faulkner's paradoxical description of Ben's death that it takes only an unskilled man, Boon, with a knife and his dog to kill the bear. What Ike learns from Ben's death is that this bear, while large, powerful, and immortal, is also real, vulnerable and mortal. Ike understands what Sam was attempting to teach him: there is a time to kill and a time not to kill. The hunt must have purpose, without which the bear and, by implication, nature risk destruction.

The impact of Ben's death affects Ike for many years after. Ben's death affirms the possibility of the destruction of the wilderness, destruction caused by man. The dead bear exhibits the scars of the many failed attempts on its life, just as the wilderness earlier described by Sam exhibits the scars of human encroachment:

> Then it was dawn and they all went out into the yard to look at Old Ben, with his eyes open too and his lips snarled back from his worn teeth and his mutilated foot and the little hard lumps under his skin which were the old bullets (there were fifty-two of them, buckshot rifle and ball) and the single almost invisible slit under his left shoulder where Boon's blade had finally found his life. . . . It was as if the old bear, even dead there in the yard, was a more potent terror still. (247)

Although the legendary bear is a construct of Ike's vision, its death affirms potent danger to Ike.

Ben's death augments his importance to Ike for two reasons. Because the quarry is killed, the process of the hunt ends. For Ike, there is no longer a purpose informing the hunt. Second, the moment that Ben dies is also the moment that Sam essentially quits living. Without Ben and Sam, Ike is without teachers; the boy, now a man, carries the lessons of childhood with him. Symbolically, Sam and Ben are linked: Sam brings Ben to life in Ike's imagination, and together, they teach Ike the importance of living harmoniously with nature, and, they die, simultaneously, having fulfilled their purpose, to educate Ike for his initiation into manhood.

The significance of the lessons Ike has learned from Sam and Ben transcend the hunt. As seen in parts 4 and 5 and the chapter "Delta Autumn," Ike tries to assimilate the importance of Ben's death. Parts 4 and 5, and "Delta Autumn" deal with the aftermath of Sam's and Ben's deaths. Part 4 takes place when Ike is near twenty-one and his cousin Cass McCaslin is trying to convince Ike to take the land he is to inherit, presumably on his twenty-first birthday. Cass relies on a biblical, western-religious justification for taking the bequeathed land. But Ike has made up his mind to refuse his inherited land. The more Ike discovers about the land he is to inherit, the more significant his relationship with Sam and Ben becomes:

> an old bear, fierce and ruthless not just to stay alive but ruthless with the fierce pride of liberty and freedom, jealous and proud enough of liberty and freedom to see it threatened not with fear not even alarm but almost with joy, seeming deliberately to put it into jeopardy in order to savor it and keep his old strong bones and flesh supple and quick to defend and preserve it; an old man, son of a Negro slave and an Indian king, inheritor on the one hand of the long chronicle of a people who had learned humility through suffering and learned pride through the endurance which survived the suffering, and on the other side the chronicle of a people even longer in the land than the first, yet who now existed there only in the solitary brotherhood of an old and childless Negro's alien blood and the wild and invincible spirit of an old bear; a boy who wished to learn humility and pride in order to become skillful and worthy in the woods . . . [but] he feared he would never become worthy because he had not learned humility and pride though he had tried, until one day an old man who could not have defined either led him as though by the hand to where an old bear . . . showed him that, by possessing one thing other, he would possess them both. (295-96)

From the bear, Ike learns pride and humility; he learns to be "worthy in the woods," to respect the "liberty and freedom" which the old bear so proudly and jealously protected and preserved. He is free from the need to possess people and things. "Sam Fathers set me free" declares Ike (300). He cannot own the land, just as he could not own the bear and its "invincible spirit."

The impact of Sam and Ben on Ike's life continues beyond their deaths. In part 5, which depicts Ike's return, two years later, to the hunting camp which is soon to be sold and logged, Faulkner makes the point that Ike is beginning to understand his relationship with Sam and Ben:

> [S]ummer, and fall, and snow, and wet and saprife spring in their ordered immortal sequence, the deathless and immemorial phases of the mother who had shaped him if any had toward the man he almost was, mother and father both to the old man born of a Negro slave and a Chickasaw chief who had been his spirit's father if any had, whom he had revered and harkened to and loved and lost and grieved: and he would marry someday and they too would own for their brief while that brief unsubstanced glory which inherently of itself cannot last and hence why glory: and they would, might, carry even the remembrance of it into the time when flesh no longer talks to flesh because memory at least does last; but still the woods would be his mistress and his wife. (326)

Ike realizes that he is a part of nature. It is his mistress and his wife. Like Sam and Ben, he is part of "the deathless and immemorial phases" of nature which will continue only if protected by a belief and a memory that it is worth protecting, because "memory at least does last."

Non-Native disinterest, even disrespect, toward the bear and the wilderness is portrayed in "Delta Autumn," which takes place more than sixty years after Sam and Ben die; in this chapter the hunters are sportsmen who do not respect nature and who kill without purpose. Now one of the old people, Ike tries to pass on the relevance of hunting deer to the young people who accompany him, as Sam Fathers did before him:

> Then November would come again, and again in the car with two of the sons of his old companions, whom he had taught not only how to distinguish between the prints left by a buck or a doe but between the sound they made in moving, he would look ahead past the jerking arc of the windshield wiper and see the land flatten suddenly and swoop, dissolving away beneath the rain as the sea itself would dissolve. (336)

Faulkner provides a comparison between old Ike and Sam Fathers. Ike, like Sam Fathers, has no heirs, no immediate family to which to pass on his knowledge. He is "Isaac McCaslin, 'Uncle Ike', past seventy and nearer eighty than he ever corroborated any more, a widower now and uncle to half a county and father to no one" (3). On this hunting trip Ike contemplates the differences between past hunts and the one he is about to embark on. He notes how the land has changed. The wilderness is no longer thirty miles away but two hundred. He recognizes that the wilderness is being eroded and that his role, like Sam and Ben's, is to educate a new generation of "hunters." The young men are more concerned with war and Hitler than the immediate hunt and find it difficult to relax. Ike, now the teacher, tries to focus them on the hunt by drawing deer hunting and war together. He says they should try to protect the wilderness and not kill it without reason:

> Does and fawns both. The only fighting anywhere that ever has anything of God's blessing on it has been when men fought to protect does and fawns. If it's going to come

> to fighting, that's a good thing to mention and remember too. (339)

Ike attempts to impart to the young hunters the wisdom that if there is no respect for the animals, there can be no respect for other humans. But they do not listen.

Hunting animals was once a consecrated act. It was an act that informed Ike with a purpose and that was associated with his quest for self-knowledge, knowledge and lucidity, which Sam and Ben helped him achieve. The young men indulge Ike, taking him hunting when he is far too old. When they go out to hunt the first morning, they leave him in camp to sleep. He does not. Instead, lying in bed, he recalls the first time he killed a deer and the significance of what Sam Fathers said to him more than sixty years earlier. It now makes sense to him; hunting must have a purpose: "*I slew you; my bearing must not shame your quitting life. My conduct forever onward must become your death*; marking him for that and for more than that" (351). Hunting must be more than making a kill; "more than that," it must acknowledge respect.

Faulkner uses Ike's perception of Ben to suggest that there is a malice inherent in killing animals for sport. Ike aligns Ben's death to the many injustices done to the land,

> --that whole edifice intricate and complex and founded upon injustice and erected by ruthless rapacity and carried on even with at times downright savagery not only to the human beings but the valuable animals too, yet solvent and efficient and, more than that. (298)

Without purpose and respect for the quarry, hunting is savagery and the sport-hunter a savage murderer. The result, Faulkner implies, is the potential destruction of both nature and man.

In "The Bear," Ben is presented from both a Native perspective, as Faulkner perceives it through Sam Fathers, and an Euro-American perspective, particularly through Boon. With Ben, a bear, and Sam, a Native American, as his teachers, a young White American learns respect for the bear and for nature and learns that the only difference between himself and the bear is his ability to make choices that will determine the future of both nature and humanity. As we will see in Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, failure of humanity to respect nature and the bear has devastating consequences, both for individuals, as exemplified in D.J., and for the community, as exemplified in the novel by a malignant corporate America.

CHAPTER THREE

KILLING THE BEAR: SYMBOLICALLY DESTROYING AMERICA IN NORMAN MAILER'S *WHY ARE WE IN VIETNAM?*

Although in Norman Mailer's 1967 novel *Why Are We In Vietnam?* the bear has less presence than in Thorpe's and Faulkner's stories, its role and significance, and the message it delivers are clear: the pursuit of wealth, power, and war is a betrayal of both nature and human relationships. The novel portrays the modern bear hunt not as being a process in harmony with nature, but as being a perverse symbol of man's power over nature, a power which is symbolically represented by a man killing a grizzly bear. Killing a bear in *Why Are We In Vietnam?* prepares the protagonist, D.J., to become a soldier, a killer. He gets close to a dying bear, and what he sees in the eyes of the bear is the acknowledgment of betrayal. Just as the meaning of Ben's death is questioned by Ike, the meaning of the bear's death is questioned by D.J. D.J. learns from the act of killing a bear that the hunt has prepared him only to betray himself, humanity, and the laws of nature.

In *Why Are We In Vietnam?* the bear is a less well defined character than it is in "The Big Bear of Arkansas" and "The Bear." The hunt in Mailer's novel is not for a specific bear as it was in those stories. The bears in *Why Are We In Vietnam?* are simply the intended quarry of the hunt. "The Big Bear of Arkansas" and "The Bear" focused on the bear hunt and the bear as a teacher to the hunter. The authors distinguished the hunter from the sportsman through the process of the hunt.

Norman Mailer ridicules bear hunting as a symbolic passage to manhood. The bear hunt in *Why Are We In Vietnam?* is no longer a symbol of the rite of passage, as it was in Faulkner. It has evolved into a symbol of betrayal: it is a betrayal of the ritual hunt that teaches young men pride, humility, and respect for animals and nature. In *Why Are We In Vietnam?* not only has the traditional purpose of the hunt been lost, the only modern purpose being to kill (to acquire a competitive edge), but also the process or the means of the hunt has been altered. The result is a seemingly justifiable use of disproportionate and excessive weaponry. Most significantly, acknowledgment and respect for the quarry, the bear, has disappeared, as evinced by the inferior, although not insignificant, role ascribed to the bear in Mailer's hunt. The bear hunt degenerates into a symbol of the corporate struggle for power and wealth.

My discussion will look at the events that led up to the bear hunt, particularly D.J.'s relationship with his father, Rusty; the killing of the bear; and the repercussions of killing the bear, all of which are implied in D.J.'s use of language. The novel is divided into "Chaps," which develop the story of the bear hunt, and "Intro Beeps," which are interjections, invective comments by D.J. on the action and events of the story. D.J. blames his present predicament--he is about to leave to fight in the Vietnam War--on this one hunting trip he took with his father: "you may be shit-and-sure, and [it] derives from their encounter with all the human shit and natural depth of their Moe Henry hunt two year ago" (157).

Sandy Cohen proposes that the novel implies numerous reasons for America's participation in the Vietnam War: the "American male's sexual habits are too closely linked to his quest for violence"; the "corporational jargon [that] America uses impedes communication"; "America's obsession with cleanliness"; "America's never ceasing expansion"; and "the increasing dehumanization of life, the replacing of man by machines"(107-09). These causes are illustrated in the father's character, developed during the bear hunt; reflected in the dying bear's eyes (a reflection that foreshadows the atrocities of the Vietnam War); and finally embodied in D.J.'s language as he recalls the events of the hunt. This recollection, which comprises the betrayal, uses his own rebellious language with its own structure, and parodies both the language of the tall tale and Faulkner's initiation story.

The tacit belief, which is challenged in the novel, is that when older men take younger men into the wilderness to face the greatest hunting challenge nature offers--the bear--something worthy is passed on. Rusty appears at first to be a Sam Fathers figure who, through his patient teaching, instills in his son a respect for nature and, consequently, the ability to survive harmoniously with it. Just as Sam Fathers took young Ike, and just as Rusty's father had done with him, Rusty is going to initiate his son into the realm of men through hunting. Before "he hit a well and the Jethroes was rich" (131-32), Rusty was taught by his father to care for and to pay minute attention to all aspects of hunting and the wilderness. The Jethroes were hunters out of necessity. Hunting changed, as Rusty notes, when his father struck oil. With wealth, hunting became unnecessary as a means for survival. Consequently, the hunting legacy Rusty passes on to D.J. is devoid of necessity and devoid of rationale--the absences of which are reflected in D.J.'s story.

According to Robert Merrill, D.J.'s relationship with his father defines the novel's three distinct stages: first D.J. "rejects his father and the upper-middle-class culture he represents, then he embraces the 'new man' his father seems to become during the hunt, and finally he rejects his father altogether once the change is revealed as illusory" (Merrill 74). Furthermore, "Mailer . . . justifies D.J.'s extreme alienation from his father's 'civilized' world by rendering the careerism, hypocrisy, and vanity of . . . Americans" (Merrill 75). The problems D.J. has with his father are a microcosm of the problems of American society.

The telling of this story, according to D.J., results from the resentment he has for his avaricious father, who, by claiming the bear kill, which rightly belongs to D.J., betrays his son. The story also results from D.J.'s resentment of a government that has conscripted him to fight in the Vietnam War. He discusses his story in "Intro Beep 8":

> The pure moment of salt forming the crystal of this narrative going through D.J.'s super-accelerated

> consciousness at eighteen right here and now when he sitting at the dinner table in the Dallas ass manse with Mr. Rusty Smoking Jacket, Halleloo all beautiful perfumed tits popping big tasty hostess heaves and Tex across from him, D.J.'s mother humping up secret heart of pussy welter wallow and slide tug suck fuck for Tex's nineteen-year-old-dick, Tex, D.J.'s best friend, blood brother, incest is electric man, never forget, and eighteen between D.J. and Rusty it is all torn, all ties of properly sublimated parental-filial libido have been X-ed out man, die, love, die . . . it's all torn, torn by the inexorable hunt logic of the Brooks Range when D.J. was sixteen, wait and see. Here they go. Here is the result of Rusty losing female grizzer with twelve male plugs from I don't know how many shooting tubes, thinking of fighting over a trophy which is as unknowing of its killer as the poor town fuck must be unknowing of the parental origins of her latest feet-ass (and head) now in embryo in her womb, forgive D.J. for acting like Dr. James Joyce, all junkies are the same, you know. Follow the hunt. (125-26)

As he says, "between D.J. and Rusty it is all torn . . . torn by the inexorable hunt logic" when D.J. was sixteen. D.J. illustrates in his own language his belief that his father is representative of an unloving, avaricious, corporate America and that this one bear-hunting safari in Alaska and the "inexorable hunt logic" are responsible for his present situation: sitting at a dinner table, stoned on marijuana, caustically recounting in his mind events that took place two years earlier in Alaska, on the eve of his departure for the Vietnam War.

To D.J., his father represents the deficiency of America, with its corporate mentality of competitive greed. While sitting at the dinner table, looking at his father, D.J. contemplates his future and sees only qualities he disdains. Brought on from dread, fear, or drug induced paranoia, the thought of being like his father renders D.J. very anxious. Remembering the events of the hunt, he says:

> If D.J. wouldn't take to pot at family dinners he might not have such a Fydor Kierk kind of dread looking into Big Daddy's chasm and tomb. But that dread's out there, man. Because Rusty is also the highest grade of asshole made in America and so suggests D. J.'s future: success will stimulate you to suffocate! (37)

His father's company makes cigarette filters that kill, that cause lip cancer (31), but earn a financial profit, a profit which Rusty believes justifies the sacrifice of a few cancer victims. Corporate America as represented by Rusty is unloving; it does not reciprocate its love for money, as D.J. muses:

> love is dialectic, man, back and forth, hate and sweet, leer-love, spit-tickle, bite-lick, love is dialectic, and corporation is DC, direct current, diehard charge, not dialectic man, just one-way street, they don't call it Washington D.C. for nothing. (125-26)

D.J. remarks that corporate America is not dialectic; it takes but does not give. Power, achieved by winning, by making a kill, is the epitome, the goal, of the corporate pursuit represented by Rusty.

To illustrate his father's monomaniacal obsession with winning, D.J. recalls a football game he and his father, a former college football star, played when D.J. was thirteen. Misunderstanding his physically out of shape father and his lack of stamina,

> D. J. made a fatal misestimate of reckoning--he felt sorry for his dad. He let him tackle him just once. Jes once--right in the dry linty Dallas old navel of Texas. Rusty was so het up, he flung D. J. and--mail in your protests--he bit him in the ass, right through his pants. . . . That poor D. J. He was a one-cheek swivel ass running on one leg for the next ten minutes while Rusty tackled him whoong! whoong! over and over again. Trails of glory came out of his head each time he got hit. "Randy," said Rusty, afterward, "you got to be a nut about competition. That's

> the way. You got to be so dominated by a desire to win that if you was to squat down on the line and there facing you was Jesus Christ, you would just tip your head once and say, 'J.C., I have to give you fair warning that I'm here to do my best to go right through your hole'." (40-1)

Rusty believes in winning at any cost and justifies means that are harmful to his son. He wants D.J. to be competitive, but instead imparts a destructive lesson. Rusty hunts for bear with the same pugnacious zeal with which he plays football: win at all costs. The means he uses to kill a bear are not significant to him. Killing a bear carries importance only to the extent that it confirms his masculinity according to his corporate world beliefs. "Rusty's problem is simple," D.J. tells the reader. "He can't begin to consider how to go back without a bear. He got a corporation mind. He don't believe in nature; he puts his trust and distrust in man" (53).

Rusty's competitive nature is carried with him to the Alaskan hunt. What he cannot accomplish on his own, he buys. Although he has hired the most desired and sought after hunting guide in Alaska, Big Luke Fellinka, an Indian, Rusty, according to D.J., sees the guide as competition:

> [A]ttention America to how Rusty shapes up in a contest against a man who is not an asshole--to wit, Mr. Luke Fellinka, head guide and hunter extraordinaire for the Moe Henry and Obungekat Safari Group. . . . Rusty is the most competitive prick there is, and Big Luke is a sweet old bastard. (38)

Instead of acknowledging Luke's expertise as a hunter, Rusty feels threatened. Rusty has also brought D.J.'s friend Tex Hyde and two business associates, last minute replacements--"Medium Asshole Pete and Medium Asshole Bill" (50)--to witness his hunting prowess. And, to ensure that he kills a bear, Rusty has brought with him an arsenal of weapons. In fact, D.J. devotes the entire fifth chapter, which is also the longest chapter in the novel, to describing the guns each member has brought for the hunt, the power of each gun, and its effectiveness. Medium Asshole Pete's gun is a

> banged-up, African rhinoceros-hippo-elephant-soften-the-bullet-for-the-lion double-barreled .600-.577 custom, only-one-of-its-kind-ever-built Jeffrey Nitro Express carrying a 900-grain bullet for Shot #1, a 750 grain for Shot #2, and a recoil guaranteed to knock a grand piano on its ass. (82)

The fact that Medium Asshole Pete's gun is more powerful than Rusty's further establishes the competitiveness of the hunt, a hunt which has little to do with the skill or expertise of the hunter. The description of the weapons also suggests that these are not real hunters, but men who have lost (or never gained) the true meaning of the hunt. Ortega Y Gasset, in *Meditations on Hunting*, acknowledges that there must be some boundaries on the weapons used to kill animals. When "man lets loose his immense technical superiority," he is not hunting: "To exterminate or to destroy animals by an invincible and automatic procedure is not hunting" (53-4).

Because of his father's competitive nature, D.J. is taught to be a sportsman, not a hunter. Rusty prepares D.J. for the hunt only by teaching him about the weapons. This preparation is unlike the careful preparation given to Ike before he began hunting, and the knowledge he acquired of the bear. D.J.'s preparation for his big hunt is a mockery of ritual initiation procedures. He is not being taught the skills of a hunter. He knows very little of his quarry. In fact, Rusty and his associates are in Alaska to mutilate animals, a "sport" in which the killing of a grizzly bear confirms their masculinity and their virility. They are murdering, not hunting or teaching. They are, as D. J. calls them, "Dallasassians" (99), a play on the words "Dallas" and "assassins."

In D.J.'s initiation hunt, the ritual of the hunt has been lost in the quest for the kill, a quest that has become largely reliant on machinery and weaponry. Indeed Big Luke, D.J. tells us, even uses helicopters to track down animals for his paying customers, not the learned and intuitive hunting acumen and prowess normally associated with an experienced, professional, hunting guide. D.J. grants that Big Luke is judicious in selecting which hunters need the benefits of the helicopter:

> He was forever enough of a pro not to use it with real hunters, no, man, but he had us, gaggle of goose fat and asshole, killer of bile-soaked venison, so the rest of the hunt, all next seven days he gave what was secretly wanted, which was helicopter heaven, for of course we did not hunt from the air, no freakman from TV land us, but rather noble Dallasassians, so we broke open war between us and the animals, and the hunthills of the Moe Henry and Obungekat Safari patch rang with ball's ass shooting. (99)

D.J. detects the inappropriateness and inequality of the use of helicopters in hunting. He indirectly acknowledges that he and his group were not "real hunters" and that they were not hunting but "[breaking] open war between [them] and the animals." The method "Moe Henry and Obungekat Safari" use to kill animals is equivalent to fighting in an unbalanced war, where the opponents are not equally armed (a parallel to the widely held American belief, in 1967, that superior American weaponry would subjugate the Vietnamese):

> Cop Turds are exploding psychic ecology all over the place, and this is above the *Circle*, man, every mind, human, animal, even vegetable, certainly mineral (crystal mineral) is tuned in to the place, wait and see, better believe, Big Luke knows he's getting away with too much, he's violating the divine economy which presides over hunters. (115)

Big Luke has upset the balance in nature by using helicopters to hunt and has unfairly balanced the relationship between hunter and quarry. "Real hunters" are sensitive to and respectful of their quarry and its habitat--lessons real hunters learned as they were initiated through the traditional ritual hunt. Conversely, sport hunters in their relentless quest for a kill have become desensitized to their quarry while carelessly disregarding the environment. Sport hunters, greedily encouraged by Luke to excessive force, "violat[e] the divine economy which presides over hunters."

When D.J. kills his first animal, a mountain goat, Mailer shows that the sport-hunter is insidiously desensitized. At first, not only does D.J. empathize with the animal's pain and agony, but also he feels he has disturbed the balance and harmony of the wilderness:

> Wham! the pain of his exploding heart shot like an arrow into D.J.'s heart, and the animals had gotten him, they were talking all around him now, communicating the unspoken unseen unmeasurable electromagnetism and wave of all the psychic circuits of all the wild of Alaska. (99-100)

D.J. immaturely believes he is sensitive to the malaise in the wilderness. He senses the "essential animal insanity of things" (70) and discovers that no place is remote from the saturation of civilization. However, when D. J. looks at the goat he has killed, his reaction suggests his empathy is not genuine:

> [B]ut D.J. never looked at the head of the goat except once, for the goat had a clown's expression in his little-ass red dying eyes, the fires of the heart working to keep custard on the clown's face, it wasn't until that night when he was in the bunkhouse back at Dolly Ding Bat that D.J. relaxed enough to remember that goat picking his way up and down rocks like a slow motion of a skier through slalom, his legs and ass swinging opposite ways, carefree, like take one leg away, I'll do it on the other, and it hit D.J. with a second blow on his heart from the exploding heart of the goat and he sat up in bed, in the bunk, listening to the snores, stole out to the night, got one breath of the sense of the force up in the North . . . his sixteen-year-old heart racing through the first spooks of an encounter with Herr Dread. (101-02)

D.J. had been initially inattentive to his quarry; he "never looked at the head of the goat except once" and saw only "a clown's expression in the little-ass red dying eyes." It is only later and at night that he is visited by the "first spooks" that accompanied his first kill, spooks which foreshadow his later response to the dying bear.

D.J.'s remorse over killing the mountain goat is quickly replaced by a sense of power and enjoyment, which he seeks to fuel with successive kills of successively more challenging animals. When D.J. sees his first ram, "the prettiest face D.J. has ever seen, almond oval and butter love for eyes, a little black sweet pursed mouth" (104), he falls in love with it, before he kills it, suggesting his love of killing is growing. The attraction D.J.

has for the Dall ram is identical to the attraction he would have for a woman. However, juxtaposing this attraction with killing distortedly confirms his masculinity; Mailer associates the act of killing with sex and virility. It is at this point, when he enjoys killing, that he simultaneously feels a part of the group: "They all had Dall ram that day. Five sets of horns held in the arms of five shit-eating grins" (105).

For Rusty, killing weaker animals, such as mountain goats or rams, does not connote the same domination over nature as killing a grizzly bear. Everyone in the hunting group (except Rusty, who needs "Four .404s" to kill one) does well shooting Dall rams. Rusty's sense of ineptitude, however, turns to recrimination when he tells Luke that he did not spend his money to kill rams. Rusty paid to kill a bear, "to cut the fiercest mustard you ever tasted with a piece of bear steak, I want to behold Bruin right in his pig red eye so I'll never have to be so scared again, not until I got to face The Big Man" (62). Luke responds by using the helicopter to find a bear for Rusty to kill. Rusty shoots, but misses the first bear. He also misses the second bear, which Tex kills, and the third bear, which M.A. Pete kills. Fed up, Rusty decides to take D.J. and walk back "to Ding Bat and see if we can't encounter what we come to find" (122)--a grizzly bear.

At this point, when Rusty rejects Luke and the group, and takes his son to hunt a bear, D.J. admires his father, the "stud," and anticipates that his initiation will be successful. D.J. is impressed with his father's decision to break away from the group: "he don't know if he's going to be a hero or dead, but he loves his daddy this instant, what a fuck of a stud, they will take off together, they will make their own way back to Camp, and Big Luke will sweat a huge drop" (123). The experience is mixed with euphoria and horror. Away from the group and his acolytes and alone with his son, Rusty acts differently. Instead of assuming a competitive stance and talking corporate jargon, he startles D.J. by pointing out and naming all the flowers (129). And, surprisingly to D.J., Rusty tells D.J. that he thinks the American eagle is the worst possible symbol of America; it is "the most miserable of the scavengers, worse than crow" (133). Much to D.J.'s approval, Rusty acknowledges a skepticism about the competitive capitalist system. The camaraderie he feels with his father is revealed by D.J.'s perceptive and respectful impression of nature:

> Next step was into a pool of odor which came from the sweets of the earth, sweet earth smell speaking of endless noncontemplative powers, beds of rest, burgeoning, spring of life, a nectar for the man's muscles on the odor of that breath, yeah, D. J. was breathing his last, he was in the vale of breath, every small smell counted, it was the most fucking delicious moment of his life up to that point. (140)

Nature is non-threatening, as is the momentary affection he has for his father.

In the wilderness, inaccessible by the helicopter, and away from the other hunters, just as D.J.'s affection is flourishing, they shoot a bear--the decisive event in the novel (140). In its agony of death, the bear imparts its wisdom to D.J. and allows him a glance into his future. By shooting but only wounding the bear, D.J. causes the animal to fall down an embankment. When he goes to take a closer look at the animal, what he sees in the bear is not only the pain he has inflicted, but also a projection of his guilt. He is neither horrified nor in love with the bear, as he was when he killed the mountain goat and the ram. The bear, he feels, is telling him something, but he must get closer to find out what:

> Yeah, that beast was huge and then huge again, and he was still alive--his eyes looked right at D.J.'s like wise old gorilla eyes, and then they turned gold brown and red like the sky seen through a ruby crystal ball, eyes were transparent, and D.J. looked in from his twenty feet away and took a step and took another step and another step and something in that grizzer's eyes locked into his, a message, fellow, an intelligence of something very fine and very far away, just about as intelligent and wicked and merry as any sharp light D.J. had ever seen in any Texan's eyes any time (or overseas around the world) those eyes were telling him something, singeing him, branding some part of D.J.'s future, and then the reflection of a shattering message from the shattered internal organs of that bear came twisting through his eyes in a gale of pain, and the head went up, and the bear now too weak to stand up, the jaws worked the pain.
>
> Then the gale subsided. The peace came back to the eye, pain fading like the echo of the last good note, and that wild wicked little look of intelligence in the eye, saying something like, 'Baby, you haven't begun'. (146-47)

The closer D.J. gets to the bear the more human it becomes, as the bear does for Lou in Marian Engel's *Bear.* His perception of the bear evolves from beast, to gorilla (human-like), to Texan (human). D.J. recognizes that the bear is sentient and intelligent. Its intelligence is as "sharp" as any "D.J. had ever seen in any Texan's eyes." The message in the bear's eyes "brand[s] some part of D.J.'s future." D.J. is profoundly altered by looking into the bear's eyes. Mailer evokes a parodic allusion to Emerson's "Nature" by noting that the bear's eyes were transparent. Emerson transcended his ego when he confronted nature and "become a transparent eye-ball. I am nothing. I see all [and that] all mean egotism vanishes" (Emerson 409). D.J.'s egotism vanishes like Emerson's.

The affection D.J. has for his father is abruptly negated when Rusty fires the final shot, terminating the bear and depriving D.J. of any further opportunity to understand what the bear is communicating to him, and killing with it any faith D.J. has in him. Rusty, with his corporate agenda, to win at all costs, betrays his son. Rusty's false claim, which reveals the return to his corporate mentality, that he deserves the kill, marks the first major step in D.J.'s disillusionment. D.J. fired the shot that first immobilized the grizzly, and, therefore, according to Big Luke's rules, deserves credit for the kill; however, back at camp, Rusty claims distinction for himself. Rusty's corporate mentality requires that he claim the kill. When asked whose bear it is Rusty says, "'Yeah, I guess it's mine, but one of its sweet legs belongs to D. J.' Whew. Final end of love of one son for one father" (147). D.J. points to this as the decisive moment when his love for his father ends. D.J. realizes that how he saw his father when they were apart from the group was a feeble spark of something nearly dead. Corporate life has "killed" his father.

The betrayal by his father becomes the catalyst for D.J. to explore nature in search for the meaning of the message in the dying bear's eyes. Because of his father's greedy need for recognition for the kill and because D.J. feels he has been denied the chance to communicate with the bear, he decides to leave his father and the group, to purge himself from their damaging effects--their competitive greed. D.J. goes off with his friend Tex to consider what the dying bear was trying to communicate. It is not only the excessive means used to kill that D.J. feels is wrong with hunting, but also the rationale for it: ego and power.

D.J. and Tex go off to experience nature without the corruption of the guns and the machinery that defile nature and inflate a sport-hunter's ego. Just as Ike did when he went off on his own to find the bear, D.J. and Tex go unarmed. The boys' senses are excited by the thought of being unarmed, unburdened by civilization. Mailer indicates this awakening by noting that the boys see the meadow as beautiful. The illuminating sun highlights red and yellow berries; dwarf huckleberries and cranberries and Arctic flowers are everywhere. Their sense of smell is stimulated, as is their intuition. They become more confident in and reliant on their instinct rather than their intellect. Similarly, in Marian Engel's *Bear*, Lou learns to rely on her instinct rather than her intellect.

In the wilderness, without weapons to defend themselves, D.J. and Tex meet the animals as equals: "Two waves of murder, human and animal, meet across the snow . . . fantastic and beautiful" (181). Both animals and humans, D. J. suggests, are capable of murder. D.J. expects the animals, like the humans he has come to know, to be murderers too. It is a perception that changes when a wolf they see does not attack, to their bewilderment, and kill them, as they expect it to do. Unarmed, they believe that they have stopped the wolf with their will: "knocked [him] on his psychic ass" (182). That the wolf does not attack them, thrills and empowers them: "they feel just as clean and on-edge and perfect . . . Man, it's terrifying to be free of mixed shit" (184). D.J. and Tex feel empowered by what they think is their ability to psychically fend off a wolf without the aid of weapons and away from the masculine social structure.

Their newfound confidence is tested and then overturned when, after they watch a bear playing and it does not attack them or even detect their presence, they watch the northern lights. The bear is indifferent to them. They watch it "burp," "sigh," "dig," "eat," "scratch," and "kill" (188-91). The bear, contrary to their expectations, is not on the attack. Rather, it is occupying itself with the fundamentals of living. D.J. recognizes that it is not Tex and he fending off the bear with their will, but that, unthreatened, the bear will not attack. They watch the northern lights, the effulgence of which talks to them. But what it says is not what they expect:

> For the lights were talking to them, and they were going with it, near to, the lights were saying that there was something up here, and it was really here, yeah, God was here, and He was real and no man was He, but a beast, some beast of a giant jaw and cavernous mouth with a full cave's breath and fangs, and secret call: come to me. (202)

As a beast, a bear-like beast with a "giant jaw and cavernous mouth" and "fangs," the north tells them in clear, absolute language to "[f]ulfill my will, go forth and kill" (204). D.J.'s newfound self-confidence is shattered. Not only has his father betrayed him, but also the wilderness affirms and projects D.J.'s fears that there will be retribution for his killing of animals.

In the process of the hunt, the hunter, who epitomizes male virility in this novel, is altered by the quarry, the bear. The corporate bear hunter is an impostor and is not a fair or justifiable challenge to the force of nature which D.J. has seen emanating from the bear's eyes. The corporate sport-hunter is not a hunter but a power-hungry killer and has no place in the woods. The perverse interconnection of power, killing, and virility is exposed when D.J. and Tex find themselves unarmed and alone in the wilderness; they cannot decide if they are homicidal or homosexual. Instead of feeling tranquil in nature, as is often the case in literary escapes into the wilderness, as we will see in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, D.J. and Tex feel a homoerotic attraction for each other (178-79): "they hung there each of them on the knife of the divide in all conflict of lust to own the other yet in fear of being killed by the other" (204), unable to separate love from dominating power. The hunt and their experience in nature has dutifully prepared them "never to be near as lovers again, but killer brothers," soldiers (204).

Although the hunt has trained D.J. for active service to kill, he has at the same time learned from the bear that the modern hunt, like war, is a betrayal of man and nature. D.J. is unable to reconcile the inherent contradictions of the hunt and the war he is about to join. These contradictions are reflected in his use of language.

The pronounced oral quality of the novel generates immediacy to the disembodied voice of D.J. who, as his acronym denotes, is disc jockey to the world. D.J. is the only voice in the novel. Everything is reflected and invented by him. Consequently, what we have to focus on is not a stable structure, setting or character, but instead a voice that uses different registers, different characteristics, and different personalities, but always the same outrageous, obscene irreverent tone. It is also a voice that is antithetical to the corporate voice that D.J. imagines is embodied by his father: "Rusty is corporation, right, that means he's a voice, man, he's a voice, got nothing unexpected to say, but he got to say it with quality" (50). D.J. on the other hand does not tell his story with "quality" or predictability but instead with vulgar ire.

D.J.'s unpredictable language is violent, unpredictable, and assaultive, almost bear-like in its characteristics. It parallels his post-hunt perception of corporate America. Every critic has to appraise D.J.'s prose. His use of language is an assault on the reader, the "fuckless wonder listening to the sex'l habits of all us mule-ass Texans" (19). Although it is possible to consider the novel as an oral performance, "shot through with word play, rhyme, spurious consonantal patterns, and street argot" (Ramsey 418), we are insulted so often that we have to question our role in the narrative as a member of an undetermined electronic audience:

> [L]isten, dear limpidity of the intelligent ear which has cashed in its was for hand-in-hand progression through these conceptual coils with D.J., we are going back to Aurora Borealis cause it is the only mountain of heavenly light which is certified to be result and product of magnetic disturbances--dig! you long patient asshole, we are on the track of something. (159)

D.J. does not respect his audience. He assumes his audience is of the same corporate mentality as his father. The reader is intended to take a defensive or hostile position towards D.J.'s irreverence and profanity.

The profanity in the novel is usually attributed to Mailer's belief in the repressive nature of the establishment. Mailer notes that

> a deprived world is accurate rather than liberal, condescending, and over programmatic. . . . The aim of robust art still remains: that it be hearty, that it be savage, that it serve to feed audiences with the marrow its honest presence. In the end robust art . . . gives . . . light and definition and blasts of fresh air to concerns of the world, it is a firm presence in the world, and so helps to protect the world from its dissolution in compromise, lack of focus, and entropy, entropy, that disease of progressive formlessness, that smog, last and most poisonous exhaust of the Devil's foul mouth. Yeah, and yes! Obscenity is where God and Devil meet, and so is another of the avatars in which art ferments and man distills. (Mailer; qtd. in Alderidge 96)

While Mailer suggests that profanity is related to deprived, imposed social restrictions, we can also view swearing in terms of respect. Mailer's language augments and highlights the lack of respect that the hunters have for the game they kill. The bear is victim to the hunters' assault and we are victim to D.J.'s language. The language, or rather the barrage of insults, is used to illustrate his lack of respect for the bear hunt in Alaska as well as to stress his response to it. His language highlights the inherent perversity of the corporate, civilized voice of America and more specifically his father. The language is the direct result of the hunting trip.

D. J. in his final "intro beep," a diatribe against greed and colonialism, expresses his animosity and disdain for the circumstances that have made it necessary for him to fight in a war. It is a curse on a process that reaches back farther than his immediate predicament:

> A ring of vengeance like a pitch of the Saracen's sword on the quiver (what a movie was that, madame!) rings out of the air as if all the woe and shit and parsimony and genuine greed of all those fucking English, Irish, Scotch and European weeds, transplanted to North America, that sad deep sweet beauteous mystery land of purple forests, and pink rock, and blue water, Indian haunts from Maine to the shore of California, all gutted, shit on, used and blasted, man, cause a weed thrives on a cesspool, piss is its nectar, shit all ambrosia and those messages at night . . . cutting the night air, giving a singe to the dream field, all the United Greedies of America. (206)

All the immigrants, the pioneers, settlers, have singed, burned, and destroyed the "sad deep sweet beauteous mystery land of . . . Indian haunts." America's greed has betrayed the land, according to D.J., exemplified by the senseless death of the bear.

Mailer has taken what he sees as "the pervasive malignity of our electronic air" (5) and placed it beside one of the oldest narratives, the recounting of the hunt. The result draws attention not only to the ingenuity of the narrator, but also to the effect the hunt has on D.J., his friend Tex, and even Rusty. Although the novel aligns itself with an oral voice, Mailer constantly cites literary examples to remind the reader just how reliant he is on imaginative literature to evaluate nature and just how much this novel is a refutation of the romantic view of nature. The conquering of nature, exemplified by the senseless slaughter of bears, according to Mailer's narrative, is based on an unhealthy corporate model, a "direct current" model which, by its own greed will systematically, through destruction of the environment and through war, destroy America.

In Thorpe, Faulkner, and Mailer, the bear is a teacher, a link to nature, a symbol of the chasm that has developed between the new, civilized, urban, corporate world and the natural world. Mailer's narrative describes the antithesis of the potential world portrayed by Faulkner and accepted by his character Ike. Unlike Ike, who finds the lucidity he sought through the bear, D.J. in the end is confused, angry, resentful, and out of control. In the Canadian narratives I discuss next, the bear's role and influence becomes more explicit. Although the context within which the bear appears in Canadian literature is different, the bear remains, as it is in Thorpe, Faulkner, and Mailer, as the instructive embodiment of nature.

CHAPTER FOUR

SETON'S BEARS: PROVOKING AN AWARENESS OF THE WILDERNESS

Ernest Thompson Seton's bear stories mark a philosophical and representational departure from the bear stories of Thorpe, Faulkner and Mailer, who portray the bear as a worthy and crafty adversary for, and teacher to, the hunter. From the bear, the protagonists in those stories learn to question their relationship with nature and themselves. Seton portrays the hunter-quarry relationship much differently: his interest is with the animal, not the hunter's perception of the animal. In Seton's bear stories, *The Biography of a Grizzly* (1899), "Johnny Bear" (1900), and *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac* (1902), the bear figures prominently as an anthropomorphised, individualized, literary character.

Seton's stories shift attention away from the hunter and his response to killing toward the animal and its response to being chased. This different approach has been called a celebration "of rational, ethical animals, who, as they rise above instinct, reach towards the spiritual. This theme, inspired as it is by a vision of a better world, provides a mythic structure for what is at first sight, realistic fiction" (MacDonald 18). In Seton's narratives the bears acquire nobility and dignity in their struggle with mankind. (The bear must learn to cope or be killed or caged.) Although it is possible to characterize the stories of Thorpe, Faulkner, and Mailer as "hunting" stories and Seton's stories as "animal" stories, all the bears share a symbolic function: to teach the readers to recognize the importance of the link between man and nature, and, hopefully, to foster in the readers an appreciation and reverence for nature.

How and why Seton's bear stories elicit our sympathy are the most important critical elements to explore and to question in his writing. "Johnny Bear," *The Biography of a Grizzly*, and *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac* address Seton's concern with the welfare of bears (and implicitly his concern for the welfare of nature and mankind) and the detrimental effect on them as European hunters and settlers moved into western North America at the turn of the twentieth century. The importance of these bear stories is their intent "to be models for human edification" (MacDonald 22). To illustrate how these bear stories are "models for human edification," I am going to look briefly at the scientific, social, geographical and political contexts in which the stories were written before I look at the individual stories.

Seton's bear stories are retellings of tales he heard or accounts of experiences he had in the western wilderness of the United States. Seton puts himself within the text of the story using the persona of a well-informed tourist who is faithfully transcribing what he sees, hears, or is told. "Johnny Bear," *Monarch; the Big Bear of Tallac* and *The Biography of a Grizzly* are set in the west: California, and near and in Yellowstone Park. "Johnny Bear" is based on an actual bear that Seton viewed in Yellowstone Park in 1897, when he was working as special correspondent for *Recreation*, studying the condition of the park's large animal population (Anderson 67). *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac* and *The Biography of a Grizzly* also began as Seton's practical observations of bears, but were combined with stories people told him.

Seton's popularity as a writer attracted both critical attention and derision from the scientific community. He was accused of being a "nature faker" by the naturalist John Burroughs and by Theodore Roosevelt (Poirier 309). Both accused him of constructing foolish animal romanticism and stated that his stories were devoid of scientific truths. Burroughs eventually changed his mind when he learned of Seton's credentials. (Seton knew more about the natural world than Burroughs [Anderson 118-28].) But Roosevelt believed that Seton's stories were derived from Native mythology and adversely affected young impressionable readers, filling them full of false and erroneous information about animals. Roosevelt's experience in nature was as a sportsman, and he was, writes Anderson, "leery of accounts related to writers by Indians because of their mystical approach in attributing supernatural traits to beasts" (121). In his stories Seton is careful not to ascribe mythical characteristics to his bears, although he does attempt to foster an awareness for the rationale behind their actions.

Seton erroneously assumed universality among Native American tribal beliefs; nevertheless, he believed the ideal individual was the Native for whom nature was not for profit and personal gain. Seton venerated the Native Americans' approach to nature (an approach that stressed harmony with nature), and used this approach to establish what he called the Woodcraft Indians, the precursor of the Boy Scouts, to teach city children to enjoy nature and the outdoors. Seton taught the boys to understand nature, to understand Indian crafts, and to understand the Indian's relationships with animals (Anderson 130-50). In a general way, he also used a Native philosophy of animals in his bear stories.

Seton's bear stories are simple and didactic, purposefully persuading readers to sympathize with bears by representing bears in their natural habitat, a world independent of man, who is usually portrayed as pernicious. The pattern of Seton's bear stories is the same: the bear's instinct is altered by his experience of and contact with man. Consequently the bear acquires knowledge of man and extraordinary ability. The stories were written to teach and to "reassure their readers, not so much that man was superior to animals, but that animals were superior in themselves, that they could reason, that they could and did educate their young, and that they possessed and obeyed laws of their own" (MacDonald 19). His bear stories attempted to justify the ways of bears to his readers, while at the same time preserving in print legends about the West.

Seton's ideas and vision of the West were vastly different than his contemporaries' and noticeably different from the vision of the West expounded by the influential historian

Frederick Jackson Turner, who suggested to Americans that it was their democratic heritage to expand westward into the empty land. In his historical writing Turner validated America's colonial expansion westward on the basis of Darwin's determinism. In his seminal essay "Frontier in American History," he wrote,

> Up to our own day American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and advance of American settlement westward, explain American development. (199)

The goal was to tame the wilderness. Seton, on the other hand, wanted nature and the West preserved in an uncivilized state. More importantly, he wanted integrity and autonomy given back to animals, both of which he thought were denied by such writers as Darwin and Frederick Jackson Turner and even by his writing contemporaries, such as Owen Wister, John Burroughs and Theodore Roosevelt. He thought that Darwin's theories of natural selection in a sense were used to vindicate man's avaricious consumption and abuse of the natural world. Man and his "technology threatened to destroy the wilderness" (Anderson 128).

Seton did not represent this western territory as a void needing to be filled by settlers. Unlike many of his contemporaries who chronicled the West (Theodore Roosevelt, Frederick Remington, and Owen Wister), Seton saw the West as something man could never presume to dominate (Anderson 95). For Seton, the West was not synonymous with cowboy mythology.

Instead of identifying with the cowboy and glorifying cowboy mythology, Seton identified with the victims of the mythology. Seton believed that the Indian, the wolf and the grizzly bear were "victimized by persecution based on ignorance" (Anderson 185). Seton wanted the West preserved because of its geographical uniqueness and because of the animals who lived there.

Seton's concern with the rapid loss of the frontier is evident in the stories. His bear stories are designed to gain the reader's sympathy for the frontier in the time of advancing civilization into the wilderness and against the bears. In reference to his stories in *Lives of the Hunted*, Seton writes,

> My chief motive . . . has been to stop the extermination of harmless wild animals; not for their sakes, but for ours, firmly believing that each of our native wild creatures is in itself a precious heritage that we have no right to destroy or put beyond the reach of our children.
>
> I have tried to stop the stupid and brutal work of destruction by an appeal--not to reason; that has failed hitherto--but to sympathy and especially the sympathies of the coming generation. (12-13)

It is within this context of sympathetic appeal that Seton's bear stories were written. To accomplish this sympathetic identification for the animals, Seton creates composites, generic portraits of "famous bears." Seton uses the untamable bear to show the dangers of "civilizing" rather than integrating with the frontier.

"Johnny Bear," first published in 1900, symbolizes the state of the wilderness following human intervention. The story is written in six chronological parts, starting with Seton's arrival at the Fountain Hotel in Yellowstone Park and ending with Johnny's death.

The condition of the wilderness and its bear inhabitants is the focus of part one, which opens with Seton describing the setting and the cast of characters. In Yellowstone Park there are all kinds of bears who call the Fountain Hotel home: "Slim Jim," "Snuffy," "Fatty," "Little Johnny," and his mother "Grumpy." She no doubt has been given the sobriquet "Grumpy" to describe her sullen demeanor caused by caring for her pathetic little cub, which she abandons at the first opportunity. Each name given to the bears by the hotel staff draws attention to the feckless nature of the bears, the result of their invariable diet of human garbage, ingested at the hotel dump. Bear cub Johnny suffers the most from this diet: "[a]nd indeed Johnny looked sick; he was the most miserable specimen in the Park . . . Johnny had only three good legs, his coat was faded and mangy, his limbs were thin, and his ears and paunch were disproportionately large" (*Krag and Johnny Bear* 96). Seton presents "Johnny Bear" symbolically as a warning of the detrimental impact of human attempts to civilize the wilderness.

As Seton establishes in part two, the wilderness, the bears' home, has become, literally and symbolically, a dump. Seton's story is not without irony, despite its focus on the wretched nature of Johnny. The irony is that with the onslaught of American development and settlement there is no natural habitat for the bear, even in a park. In part two Seton, the well-informed tourist (a character in his own story), wants to observe bears in their natural habitat: "I was in the Park to study the home life of the animals" (97). He asks the locals to identify the best vantage point for seeing bears. The place to go is the dump. Seton, not satisfied with viewing the bears from seventy-five yards, "went to the garbage-pile itself, and, digging a hole big enough to hide in, remained there all day long, with the cabbage-stalks, old potato-peelings, tomato-cans, and carrions piled up in odorous heaps around [him]" (100). He literally sits in garbage, calling it research. The dump, human refuse, represents not only Seton's immediate, literal situation, but also the situation is a metaphor of humanity and our detrimental impact on the wilderness.

Seton anthropomorphizes the bears to draw out the reader's sympathy for them and to emphasize the damaging effect humanity has on nature. Parts three and four chronicle Seton's dogged determination to observe these bears and to illustrate his minor collision with danger when a big old grizzly bear (this grizzly is the bear from *The Biography of a Grizzly*) comes to the dump and tussles with Grumpy: "Grumpy not only stopped, but she also conformed to the custom of the country and in token of surrender held up her hands" (119). Seton observes and records the events while concealed in the refuse heap. He notes the human-like behavior and interaction of the bears, especially the way in which the bigger, older bears reprimand the smaller bears: "I was much tickled by the prompt obedience of the little Bears . . . for had they not done as she had told them they would have got such a spanking as would made them howl" (99). Seton ensures that we identify with the bears by seeing them in a familial situation (for example, a mother disciplining her errant child), and prepares us for the consequences which follow.

These anthropomorphically represented bears show the reader that, as they become more reliant on the dump's offerings for survival, they become less able to survive. Seton recognizes that the dump and its never-ending supply of human food is damaging the foraging instincts of the bears who rely on it as a food source. In parts five and six Johnny has become dependent on man for both food and nurturing and, as a result, dies. Seton leaves the park for other places, but he continues the story as hearsay--the recollections of "three bronzed mountaineers" whose first hand knowledge Seton uses to finish the story. Johnny, it seems, liked the Fountain Hotel dining accommodations better than the dump. He returned and was captured by the hotel staff: "But others of the kitchen staff appeared, and recognizing the vociferous Johnny, they decided to make him a prisoner" (123). Little Johnny befriended Nora, a chamber maid, who became his surrogate mother. Grumpy, the staff recollect, never seemed to miss her son since she never showed up after his incarceration. Johnny progressively becomes sicker in captivity and died snuggled up on Nora's lap; at the same time, this event suggests we are killing nature by our intervention, our colonization and civilization of the wilderness. For love and food Johnny is weakened; he is killed by his dependence on man and the loss of his natural instincts.

Our learning of Johnny's fate teaches us that intervention without consideration, without need, leads to purposeless destruction. Seton's use of a cute, impish, motherless, crippled cub begs the reader to sympathize with its plight. This connection with the reader's sympathy is also evident in Seton's other bear stories, *The Biography of a Grizzly* and *Monarch: the Big Bar of Tallac*.

The Biography of a Grizzly is an account of the maturation of Wahb, a grizzly bear. Like "Johnny Bear," the story of Wahb relies on Seton's authorial presence to entice the readers to give the events of the story credence. In the dedication of *The Biography of a Grizzly*, Seton notes that he spent many days at "the Palette Ranch on the Graybull, where from hunter, miner, personal experience, and the host himself, I gathered many chapters of the History of Wahb" (n.p.).

In addition to anthropomorphizing Wahb, Seton presents the story of this bear biographically. He has suggested that many of his animal stories were examples of biography. He considers the importance of the character as he develops through time. In the preface to *Wild Animals I have Known*, he writes:

> Although I have left the strict line of historical truth in many places, the animals in this book were all real characters. They lived the lives I have depicted, showed the stamp of heroism and personality more strongly by far than it has been in the power of my pen to tell.

> I believe that natural history has lost much by the vague general treatment that is so common. What satisfaction would be derived from a ten-page sketch of the habits and customs of Man? How much more profitable it would be to devote that space to the life of some one great man. This is the principle I have endeavored to apply to my animals. The real personality of the individual, and his view of life are my theme, rather than the ways of the race in general, as viewed by a casual and hostile human eye. (7-8)

One such animal, Wahb "showed the stamp of heroism and personality more strongly" than Seton can tell, although he attempts to do so. Wahb is, like any great man, an individual. In the three parts of the narrative, "Cubhood," "Days of his Strength," and "Waning," Seton illustrates Wahb's greatness, a greatness that begins with the fact that he is able to survive in spite of the misery created by man. The story has two important influences that make it more sophisticated than "Johnny Bear": it is a biography, and Seton, in his portrayal of Wahb, balances verisimilitude with anthropomorphic perception.

As Roosevelt accuses him of doing, Seton anthropomorphizes many of Wahb's reactions, but he is careful to remind his readers that Wahb's intelligence is for the most part instinctual or, to a lesser extent, gained by discovery and fortuitous coincidence. Seton also tries to divert attention from his blatant anthropomorphic sentiments by reminding the reader that Wahb's thoughts did not really take place. A notable example of Seton's anthropomorphizing occurs when Wahb serendipitously finds a sulphur bath. Seton writes: "He did not say to himself, 'I am troubled with that unpleasant disease called rheumatism, and sulphur-bath treatment is the thing to cure it.'

But what he did know was, 'I have dreadful pains; I feel better when I am in this stinking pool'" (117). The reader, who knows that Wahb is a bear, nevertheless understands and even sympathizes with his infirmities. This sympathetic approach defends Seton from the accusation of being anthropomorphic.

In *The Biography of a Grizzly*, the means of the bear's destruction is hunting as opposed to human settlement. Seton begins the story with a profile of Wahb and his family. He introduces adversity when he introduces man in the form of a hunter. In part one Seton stresses the loving family Wahb was born into, its way of life and habits: "Notwithstanding their Mother's deep conviction, the cubs were not remarkably big or bright; yet they were a remarkable family, for there were four of them, and it is not often a Grizzly Mother can boast of more than two" (12). When a hunter kills his mother and siblings and seriously injures him, life for Wahb turns difficult.

Seton, more than Mailer or Faulkner, wants the reader to see the bear's direct response to being hunted. Unlike in Thorpe, Faulkner, or Mailer, the sympathy is with the hunted and not the hunter:

> The Colonel seemed pleased with what he had done; indeed, he told of it himself. But way up in the woods of Anderson's Peak that night a little lame Grizzly might have been seen wandering, limping along, leaving a bloody spot each time he tried to set down his hind paw; whining and whimpering, 'Mother! Mother! Oh, Mother, where are you?' for he was cold and hungry, and had such a pain in his foot. (30)

He survives, but now he must confront extreme misfortune. Wahb's response is that he grows stronger physically and mentally. Still a cub, without a mother, wounded, he has to learn from experience how to survive. Black bears taunt him; coyotes and bobcats threaten him. Consequently, he becomes mean and nasty: "the persecutions by his numerous foes were making him more and more sour. Why could not they let him alone in his misery? Why was every one against him. If only he had his Mother back!" (47). Adversity makes Wahb physically and mentally stronger. When Wahb narrowly escapes capture in a leg trap, Seton writes: "It made Wahb jump; but he got away all right with the meat and some new ideas, and with one old idea made stronger" (55).

Seton assumes what life is like for a bear and, through Wahb, attempts to portray a bear's life. Closer to the natural world, the bear has a different perception and different means of perceiving the world than man. Wahb lives by the dictates of smell:

> Everything has a smell of its own for those that have noses to smell. Wahb had been learning smells all his life, and knew the meaning of most of those in the mountains. It was as though each and every thing had a voice of its own for him; and yet it was far better than a voice, for every one knows that a good nose is better than eyes and ears together. And each of these myriads of voices kept on crying, "Here and such am I." (106)

And,

> So every living thing that moved, and every flower that grew, and every rock and stone and shape on earth told out its tale and sang its little story to his nose. Day or night, fog or bright that great, moist nose told him most of the things he needed to know, or passed unnoticed those of no concern, and he depended on it more and more. If his eyes and ears together reported so and so, he would not even the believe it until his nose said, "Yes; that is right."

> But this is something that man cannot understand, for he has sold the birthright of his nose for the privilege of living in towns. (108)

Seton's sympathies in this passage lie with Wahb, whose finely attuned critical judgment, and whose dictates of smell suggest the bear's superior nature. Seton suggests that instinct has been lost to humankind in the process of civilization. We have sold our birthright, our intuitive olfactory instincts, to live in towns, an idea also explored in Engel's *Bear*. Through instinct and well-honed senses, the bear is able to distinguish between "things he needed to know . . . [and] those of no concern." By implication, Seton suggests that man having lost "his birthright" is unable to make the same, necessary distinctions.

Seton implies a distinction between the quest for domination of the West and simple exploration by man. By part two, entitled "The Days of his Strength," Wahb is into his third summer. He has not yet attained his full strength, but he is strong enough to kill a man and does. The search for gold brings successively more men into Wahb's domain, much to his indignation. He kills two men who have attempted to establish a homestead in his area. Because they try to kill him first, his retribution seems justifiable. Wahb is, according to Seton, capable of discretion: he ignores other men who do not threaten him. He knows the difference between a man who is threatening him and one who, like himself, is minding his own business. Sportsmen, as Seton suggests, are not as smart as animals. They fail to make any distinctions between threats and needs.

Wahb's decreased strength coincides with his contact with and reliance on man. Part three, "The Waning," deals with Wahb's trip to Yellowstone Park and his demise, which is brought about by his contact with man. Wahb is not at all ferocious in the park. There is an abundance of food at the dump so the struggle for survival is unnecessary, as it was in "Johnny Bear." Consequently, the bears do not compete with each other. They are no longer required to rely on their instinct. But as we saw with Little Johnny, the contact with man, the lack of competition, and the atrophy of Wahb's senses are detrimental. The trips to the park show a different side of Wahb. He is vulnerable as he gets older and no longer wants to struggle for his food. In "The Waning," Wahb loses his vitality; no longer does he desire to sustain his prowess as a hunter. Thus he is easily duped by another bear, a much smaller and more cunning grizzly. Seton writes,

> The Roachbacks, as the Bitter-root Grizzlies are called, are a cunning and desperate race. An old Roachback knows more about traps than half a dozen ordinary trappers; he knows more about plants and roots than a whole college of botanists. He can tell to a certainty just when and where to find each kind of grub and worm, and he knows by a whiff whether the hunter on his trail a mile away is working with guns, poison, dogs, traps, or all of them together. (135)

The Roachback's background suggests he is better equipped to survive than Wahb. Old and wrought with maladies, he proves to be no match for this young Roachback. Wahb concedes to the young bear; rather than go through the trauma of a battle, he commits an animal version of suicide. He walks into a canyon that traps and emits sulphur fumes, goes to sleep, and dies: "Here in this little gulch was all he sought; here were peace and painless sleep" (163). His death however is precipitated by his contact with men in the park which altered his incisive instincts: his "nose, his unerring nose, said, 'This is the track of the huge invader'" (151-52). The detrimental consequences of contact with man are explored further in Seton's last bear story.

Like Seton's other bear stories, *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac* (1902) derives from actual experiences. In this case it is the celebrated bear Monarch, a featured attraction at the San Francisco Zoo. Seton was not the only writer attracted to Monarch. Joaquin Miller, a contemporary of Seton, wrote *True Bear Stories* (1900) in which he tells a similar version of the capturing of Monarch. (Miller, like Seton, stresses throughout his book the veracity of his tales, even going so far, in the introduction, as to have a professor from Stanford University discuss the "10 types of bears" located in North America.) What is significant in a comparison of Miller's story with Seton's is that Monarch, and how he was captured, grew into a myth repeated and embellished by different writers.

The capture of the renowned Monarch affirmed man's superiority over nature. For Seton, however, conquering the Monarch was the first step toward humanity's self-destruction. He was aware of man's inability to view himself within the context of nature and believed that the vanishing western wilderness should be protected, not put on display. Seton's esteem and respect for the wilderness and his goal to preserve it are implicit in his description of the setting of this story, high “above Sierra’s peaks” in an area “that a Buddhist would have made sacred, hills that an Arab would have held holy” (17-18).

In the dedication to *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac*, Seton reflects on the spirit of a bear and the men who captured it unaware of its significance:

> To the memory of the days in Tallac’s Pines, where by the fire I heard this epic tale.
>
> Kind memory calls the picture up before me now, clear, living clear: I see them as they sat, the one small and slight, the other tall and brawny, leader and led, rough men of the hills. They told me this tale--in broken bits they gave it, a sentence at a time. They were ready to talk but knew not how. Few their words, and those they used would be empty on paper, meaningless without the puckered lip, the interhiss, the brutal semi-snarl restrained by human mastery, the snap and jerk of wrist and gleam of steelgray eye, that really told the tale of which the spoken word was mere headline . . . I give you the story then as it came to me, and yet I do not give it, for theirs is a tongue unknown to script: I give a dim translation; dim, but in all ways respectful, reverencing the indomitable spirit of the mountaineer, worshipping the mighty Beast that nature built a monument of power, and loving and worshipping the clash, the awful strife heroic, at the close, when these two meet. (3-5)

To give *Monarch the Big Bear of Tallac* "epic" and "heroic strife" Seton uses many of the same features that he used in his two other bear stories to portray the bear (motherlessness and abuse by man), but he adds elements from the popular cowboy genre. There is an heroic figure and "themes of the chase, confrontation, and retribution" (Anderson 97).

Seton wants his readers to be fully aware of man's detrimental impact on the wilderness and so he portrays the bear as a renegade outlaw figure, an outlaw created by man. Monarch is chased by hunters. He confronts and kills some, and he avenges himself on all those smaller animals who torment him before he reaches his full physical strength. Like Johnny and Wahb, Monarch's disposition is a result of man's presence in the wilderness.

Monarch is portrayed with many of the qualities of the other two bears. But he has the added element of being a hero. Monarch is a composite bear:

> In telling it I have taken two liberties that I conceive to be proper in a story of this sort.
>
> First, I have selected for my hero an unusual individual.
>
> Second, I have ascribed to that one animal the adventures of several of his kind.
>
> The aim of the story is to picture the life of a Grizzly with the added glamour of a remarkable Bear personality. The intention is to convey the known truth. But the fact that liberties have been taken excludes the story from the catalogue of pure science. It must be considered rather an historical novel of Bear life. (13-14)

The story is thinly veiled science. As Patricia Morley writes, "Seton's interest lay not in the species but in the individual, the individual hero. . . . [H]e defines a hero as an individual of unusual gifts and achievements" (351).

Unlike the hunter in *The Biography of a Grizzly*, the hunter in *Monarch the Big Bear of Tallac* is given a sympathetic role in the story. This is Seton's attempt at providing a human role model. The hunter, Lan Kellyan, is a mountain man, and, as Seton writes much later in the story, "If Gringo had been able to think clearly, he might have said: 'This surely is a new kind of man'" (142). Kellyan is like Sam Fathers, and Dave (the hunter in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*), living harmoniously with nature. He is a hunter: "hunter was written on his face, on his lithe and sinewy form, and shone in his clear gray eye" (18). He hunts and kills "a singular old Bear" who has two cubs. While Kellyan has no problem putting "a final shot in the brain" of the old she bear, his knees buckle when he hears the "plaintive whining . . . and angry growling" (18) of the cubs. He makes them pets.

One of Seton's strategies to illustrate the loss of man's integration and relationship with nature is to identify that loss with Kellyan's loss of Jack (Monarch), a relationship made accessible and understandable by Seton to anyone who has lost a pet. Jack and Jill, as Kellyan calls the two cubs, have distinctly different personalities. Jill is morose, bad tempered, and untamable. Jack is like an obedient, faithful dog, who lovingly follows Kellyan. Jill is constantly reprimanded for minor breaches, such as getting into the precious flour supply, while Jack is Kellyan's constant companion, goes where Kellyan goes and is never scolded. In a distraught moment of weakness, he sells his two cubs to another mountaineer, who kills Jill and puts a collar on Jack. Kellyan tried to get them back, but was unsuccessful in spite of his emotional appeal:

> 'Hands up,' said the stranger, with the short, sharp tone of one who had said it before, and Lan turned to find himself covered with a .45 navy Colt.
>
> 'Ye got the drop on me,' he said; 'I ain't got no gun; but look-a here, stranger, that there little B'ar is the only pard I got; he's my stiddy company an' we're almighty fond o' each other. I didn't know how much I was a-goin'to miss him.' (58-9)

Not all people are as sympathetic towards the bear as Kellyan, who recognizes that money is not worth the friendship and affection he has for it. Seton uses the affection Kellyan has for the bear cubs to illustrate once again the harm man, even when well-intentioned, perpetrates when he attempts to subdue wild animals.

The bear's reaction to his new captivity and eventual freedom illustrates the adversarial, violent result of man's attempt to dominate and control the bear, and by implication, nature. Reenacting a renaissance bear-baiting spectacle, the stranger who buys Jack keeps him chained outside a bar where he is tormented by drunks and taunted by dogs: "Cruelty was his lot, and hate was his response" (67). He grows mean, but smart. One day, ironically the Fourth of July, his owner decides to bait Jack with a bull and inadvertently gives Jack his liberty. Jack's owner advertises the event and collects bets on the outcome. When the spectacle is about to take place, Jack, who has been on a chain for eighteen months, is set free to fight. But rather than fight the bull, he jumps over the fence and runs away into the hills. On the American day of independence, Jack the bear gains his freedom. Seton directly plays on the American concern for freedom in this reversal of roles.

Following Jack's escape from captivity, the relationship between bear and man becomes adversarial. Seton's disdain for men who profit from animals is brought to the forefront when Jack escapes. Jack, a captive of man, does not know how to look after himself. He survives by killing sheep, since they are abundant, docile, and slow runners. The consequence of killing sheep is that a bounty is put on Jack. Years pass and no one is able to kill him. Jack becomes legendary and in the process his name changes to Gringo: "Ah, a Bear devill--de hell-brute--a Gringo Bear--pardon, my amigo, I mean a very terroar" (105).

Because of his early contact with man, Gringo becomes, like Faulkner's Ben, an unhuntable bear. He "managed to live, and wild-life experiences coming fast gave his mind the chance to grow" (82). Lan sets traps, which Gringo breaks; he poisons meat, which Gringo ignores. Kellyan is not discouraged, but instead takes the challenge personally, much as Jim Doggett did: "they [the hunters] vowed to kill that Bear or 'get done up' themselves" (131). Gringo's reputation escalates to the point that newspapers want reports on what is happening with the pursuit. "He's the greatest thing God has turned loose in these yer hills" (173). His name is transformed to Monarch. But with this greatness come hunters who want Monarch subdued, who want a great challenge. Stories circulate about other bears in the mountains, until Kellyan clarifies that it is just one bear. Seton writes:

> Wonderful tales were told of these various other Bears of the new breed. The swiftest was Reelfoot, the Placerville cattle-killer . . . most cunning of all was Brin, the Mokelumne Grizzly that killed by preference blooded stock. . . . Pegtrack Grizzly of Feather River was rarely seen by any. . . . He moved and killed by night. . . . But Pedro's Grizzly was the most marvelous. (180-81)

Kellyan, the most knowledgeable and adept hunter, realizes that "these bears" are actually just one: "and Kellyan told them with calm certainty: 'Pedro's Gringo, Old Pegtrack, the Placerville Grizzly, and Monarch of the Range are one and the same Bear'" (185). Ironically, Kellyan, who does not know that Monarch is Jack, is ultimately responsible for subduing Monarch.

Seton demonstrates the different motives in men such as Kellyan, who hunts for need (the hunter) and in those who hunt for profit (the sportsman). Ironically, Lan Kellyan, who is asked to pursue this ferocious sheep-killing bear, because of his hunting prowess, does not know it is his former companion. This creates melodramatic tension in the story. The money is but "a trifle, and yet enough to send the hunter on the quest--enough to lure him into the enterprise, and that was all that was needed. Pedro knew his man: get him going and profit would count for nothing" (107). Just as Sam taught Ike that those who hunt for challenge do so out of respect for the animal, so Seton writes of a hunter, "men of grit and power love grit and power" (209).

Seton uses epic language to elevate the showdown between Monarch and the men trying to capture him: "Oh, noble horses, nervy men! oh grand old Grizzly, how I see you now! Cattle-keepers and cattle-killer face to face!" (190). This language, however, is not only on behalf of Monarch, but also for the men who are unaware of the implications of their actions. When Monarch is captured, he is compared (as was Thorpe's "bar") to the biblical Samson: "Monarch, firmly planting both paws, braced, bent those mighty shoulders, and, spite of shortening breath, leaned back on those two ropes as Samson did on pillars of the house of Baal" (196-95). Although he is captured, he fights. Monarch does not retreat from the men in fact he kills some of them. Like Kellyan, he rises to the challenge: "Monarch wheeled in big, rude, Bearish joy at the coming battle brunt" (201).

Seton has carefully prepared the reader for the possibility of a reunion between Kellyan and Monarch. He brings them together several times but never close enough for Kellyan to recognize the bear, who has holes in its ears from earrings Kellyan had put in its ears so hunters would not shoot Jack. When he does recognize that Monarch is Jack, his cub, the bear is caged in the San Francisco zoo. He tries tempting him with honey. But Kellyan"broke down even as the Bear had done . . . He rose and fled from the cage" (211). Keepers who "scarcely understood the scene" (212) resuscitate Monarch with honey. Kellyan breaks down at seeing the bear caged, conquered, and subdued. Monarch is imprisoned in a zoo. The integrity of a once autonomous and majestic animal is put on display for the amusement of paying customers.

The mixture of emotions Seton has attempted to evoke in his readers is a blend of sympathy and regret for Lan and Monarch, who is now a prisoner, "seeking and raging--raging and seeking--back and forth, forever--in vain" (214). Seton compares the captive Monarch with the subdued nature. Of this moment in the story, Michel Poirier writes as follows:

> the Bear's life is compared to a river, flowing down from a mountain, the birthplace of both, leaping over or breaking all the barriers or obstacles it encounters until it reaches the plain where it ends, landlocked; Wabh's life appears as a period of strength between two ages of weakness; again, the sentimental climax at the end of other stories may help to give a feeling of completeness. (306)

We do not feel a sense of reprieve from the bear's situation, at the end of *Monarch: the Big Bear of Tallac*, but pity. Because the bear is so closely associated with nature, it is a captive nature that is put on display. The ardent preserver of the vanishing western wilderness, Seton recognizes the implications of taming, subduing, and restraining bears. Without wilderness and the animals who live in it, mankind harms himself; wilderness and mankind are inseparable.

Seton, through his anthropormorphized, sometimes heroic bears, provides the reader a glimpse of frontier wilderness at the end of the nineteenth century following the arrival of settlers. Seton uses the human-bear contact as a symbol to edify the reader as to our potential to destroy both nature and ourselves. In the next chapter I discuss Charles G.D. Roberts' *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, which presents a harmonious relationship between animals and humanity.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS' KROOF: LESSONS IN HUMAN-NATURE COMPATIBILITY IN *THE HEART OF THE ANCIENT WOOD*

In Charles G.D. Roberts' stories, bears, particularly Kroof in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, have distinctly pedagogical roles that illustrate and affirm an essential and reciprocal relationship between humans and animals. The predominant function of the bear in the stories discussed so far has been as a quarry for the hunt. Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas," Faulkner's "The Bear," and Mailer's *Why are We in Vietnam?* draw attention to the hunter and the lessons he learns from the bear. Seton's three bear stories shift the emphasis from the hunter to the bear, still portraying the bear as quarry for the hunter, but more importantly, as an entity autonomous from, but damaged by, man's presence in the wilderness. The role and representation of the bear in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* are unlike any I have discussed. In *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* the bear has an explicitly pedagogical purpose: Kroof, the she-bear, teaches Miranda, a young girl, to trust and rely on nature. Kroof also provides the basis for Miranda's eventual understanding of the link between humanity and nature.

The friendship between Miranda and Kroof functions as a link between the world of animals and humans. Roberts uses this animal-human relationship symbolically. Unlike the encounters between bears and human beings in Seton, Mailer, Faulkner, and

Thorpe, the relationship between Miranda and Kroof is interactive. Kroof is not just an animal, as was the bear in Seton's stories; in the narrative her role as a teacher is equal to the teaching roles of the human characters, particularly young Dave. Kroof is able to teach Miranda that she is part of nature but cannot fully prepare her for her role as a member of the human community. Dave steps in when Kroof's lessons can go no further.

My analysis of the role and the symbolic function of the bear in this novel will begin with a brief overview of the novel, its critics, and Roberts' other bear stories, followed by a discussion of the nature, significance, and evolution of Miranda's relationship with Kroof, and Miranda's human relationship with Dave.

In *The Heart of the Ancient Wood,* Roberts tells the story of Kirstie Craig, her precocious daughter Miranda, who is befriended by a bear, and young Dave, a hunter who later falls in love with Miranda. Kirstie and Miranda first arrive in the ancient wood as outcasts from the settlement whose members circulated rumors about Kirstie after her husband left her, rumors "that Kirstie had been fooled" and that "[p]erhaps there had been no marriage" (43). She is reminiscent of Hester from *The Scarlet Letter,* but different from Hester because she renounces society because of its myopic, intolerant view of people, and particularly of her predicament as a single mother. Kirstie escapes the insidious gossip, the "evil tongues"(35) of the human community, and goes into the wilderness with only the company of animals, which do not speak or have the capacity to judge other creatures.

When five-year-old Miranda wanders off into the forest and is attacked by a panther, a big, black, grief-stricken bear, Kroof, who only moments before lost a cub in a hunter's trap, defends the girl. From this point on Kroof and Miranda are interdependent; Miranda becomes a surrogate child for the bereft mother bear. Kroof takes it upon herself not only to protect Miranda, but also to teach her of the ways of the wild. Through their kinship, Miranda acquires knowledge normally unavailable to humans; she learns to thrive in and become a part of a world without human interaction.

Until the age of seventeen, when young Dave appears, Miranda grows up with very little human contact, befriending, with the aid of Kroof, only animals. Dave has been living a solitary hunter's life, much to the disgust of Miranda (a vegetarian, though she eats fish), who detests the killing of animals and who spurns any advances of affection he makes towards her.

The crisis in the narrative arises when Dave shoots a bear cub to provide a meal for Kirstie, who is presumably suffering, as Roberts suggests, from an iron deficiency due to her vegetarian diet. Recognizing the ailment and the cure, red meat, he hunts for Kirstie, providing her with fresh meat, for which Miranda is grateful but distressed because it causes the death of an animal.

The cub he kills, however, belongs to Kroof (although Dave never hunts in the forest where Miranda's animals live, Kroof had, unfortunately, taken her cub to a part of the woods she ordinarily never travelled), who attacks Dave, who in turn protects himself by climbing a tree, without his gun. Forced to choose between Kroof and Dave, Miranda picks up the gun, shoots her beloved Kroof, and saves Dave's life. This magnanimous gesture tells Dave that he has won the affection of Miranda; more importantly, it confirms Miranda's humanity and loyalty to her tribe (as Roberts refers to groups of similar species which share common experiences). She becomes, as Dave hoped, "all human, and could never quite go back to her mystic and uncanny wildness, her preference for the speechless, furry kin over her own warm, human kind" (256).

The simplicity of the novel has symbolic value, following a tradition originating in French Canadian literature. R. D. Mathews explored the similarities *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* has with the French tradition of the *Roman de la terre* exemplified by Louis Hemon's *Marie Chapdelaine*. This tradition, Mathews notes, uses a deceptively simple narrative which echoes other literary works (in this case works such as Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, and Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*) as the basis of its presentation of the narration: "That is the key to a novel of the land that has the deceptive simplicity of a fable but which is layered with echoes from other works, pointing up the philosophical basis for a post-Darwinian theory of value and human meaning" (155). The value and human meaning, then, expostulated in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* should be the central issue to consider in the novel.

Critics have overlooked both the significance of Kroof's role in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* and Roberts' message. Understanding the role of the bear in his narratives is central to our understanding of how Roberts suggests value and human meaning. The uniqueness of his representation of Kroof and her role in the novel are given prominence when *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* is compared to other Roberts' stories in which bears play an important role. Central to these (which Ethel Hume Bennett has collected into an anthology, "a veritable bears' gallery" (vi), called *Thirteen Bears* [1947]), are situations in which man and bear need each other. These bear portrayals are antithetical to Seton's portrayals, which show the mutually destructive potential of the man-bear relationship. To survive, man and bear must trust each other. For Roberts the result of this trust is mutual respect. "With His Back to the Wall," typical of the stories in the collection, concerns a hunter who breaks his leg and must recuperate in his cabin. Hungry, desperate, and foolish, he hunts a pack of wolves, which he finds has cornered a bear. After watching the bear fend off the pack, easily killing the wolves with its strength, he helps the bear as more wolves arrive. Similarly, in "The Gauntlet of Fire," a hunter and bear are jointly subjected to nature's capriciousness; they are forced together into a pond to protect themselves from the ravages of a forest fire. In "The Monarch of Park Barren," a guide and bear climb the same tree, taking refuge from a ferocious moose.

These bear stories are from Roberts' "nature stories" as distinguished from his poetry, historical writing, travel writing, and fiction (Pomeroy 359-64). The nature stories, the most famous of which is *Red Fox* (1905), are his attempt to convince his readers to appreciate animals and nature, just as Seton's stories attempted to do. Roberts portrays animals who exhibit superior strength or intelligence. He explains the common purpose of his animal stories in his introduction to *The Kindred of the Wild* (1902):

> as advancing civilization drew an ever widening line between man and animals, and men became more and more engrossed in the interests of their own kind, the personalities of the wild creatures which they had once known so well became obscured to them, and the creatures themselves come to be regarded, for the purposes of literature, as types or symbols merely. (19)

Roberts uses animal stories, including the bear stories found in Bennett's anthology, to "promote a return to witness of, respect for, and wonder at the natural world" (183).

The Heart of the Ancient Wood is an affirmation that humans have a place in nature and that we are subject to the same laws as other species. Even though Roberts ascribes superiority over animals to Miranda, her killing of Kroof demonstrates she is subject to the same survival choices as animals. Kroof teaches Miranda understanding and sympathy for nature, animals, and, by her own death, humanity.

The key elements in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*, Kirstie's rejection of humanity, Miranda's peculiar nature, Dave's attraction to Miranda, and Miranda's realization of her role in the natural world, revolve around the central focus of the narrative, Miranda's relationship with Kroof. The human-animal interaction, although implausible, is presented realistically but with symbolic intent. This unique bond is enabled by Miranda's gift of vision and the superiority of Kroof to other animals, and is reflected in the symbolism of war and maternal bonding.

A war metaphor is used throughout the novel as an analogy for the struggle among the animals in the forest and against their common adversary, man. Roberts alludes to this adversarial animal-human relationship in his description of old Dave (young Dave's father), who is a lumberman:

> [H]e was neither quite of the forest nor quite of the open. His winters he spent in the very deep of the wilderness, in a log camp crowded with his mates, eating salt pork, beans, hot bread; and too busy all day long with his unwearying axe to wage any war upon the furred and feathered people. (5)

Roberts distinguishes between "the forest," the wilderness, and "the open," the land cleared and cultivated by civilization, as if the forest and the open are not of the same world. People inhabit the open, and animals inhabit the forest; a few of each inhabit the neutral zone in between.

The forest, like a war zone, has different strategic zones, as Roberts suggests when old Dave arrives at the cabin: "He came out upon the spacious solitude of a clearing; pushed through the harsh belt of blackberry and raspberry canes, which grew as a neutral zone between forest and open" (17). Because there is a constant threat of war, all the "furtive folk," as Roberts calls the animals, pay heed to the most important law of the forest: "But not unless that blind, unheeding heel had been on the very point of crushing them would they have disobeyed the prime law of their tribe, which taught them that to sit still was to sit unseen" (8). Miranda enters the forest war zone and alters it. Because she is so young, she makes the war zone her playground, unconcerned with lurking dangers.

Miranda, like Ike and D.J., is open to acquiring a different view of the natural world. Her youth, naiveté, natural curiosity, and keen vision make her an eager, willing, and adept pupil for Kroof. With her remarkable eyesight, she is able to detect any animal that is nearby and to see what other human characters cannot: "Her wide, brown eyes danced elvishly. The others followed her gaze, all staring intently; but they saw no excuse for her excitement" (35). Miranda's elfish eyes suggest her uniqueness, like the "freakish, elfish . . . eyes" of Pearl from Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (97), whose eyesight was a reflection of her extraordinary insight. "Pearl, that wild and flighty little elf," was intuitively able to recognize Dimmesdale as her father (115). Roberts writes that Miranda's unique vision is accompanied by unique knowledge: "It was the child's eyes, however, that had the keener vision, the subtler knowledge" (36). Miranda is open-eyed, open-minded, and able to become Kroof's student.

Seeing the bear is the first step in the process that brings Kroof and Miranda (and, by implication, humanity and nature) together. On the first day at her wilderness home, five-year-old Miranda remarks that she sees a bear (Kroof): "'look at the nice great big dog!'" (35). Although the others do not detect the bear's presence, Kroof is aware that she has been detected: "She saw that Miranda had the eyes that see everything and cannot be deceived" (37). Kroof recognizes that Miranda is different from other humans.

Like Miranda, Kroof is a superior example of her species. Kroof's odd name draws attention to her singular and distinctive nature. Kroof's name, which suggests a grunt, sets her apart from the other animals in the novel. The domesticated animals have human names such as Michael, the cow, and Pete, the tame bear Dave talks about. The wild animals are referred to generically: the panthers, the weasels, the squirrels. Kroof is further distinguished from other animals by her superior intelligence, which is closer to that of humans: "the bear is far the most human of all the furry wood-folk, the most versatile and largely tolerant, the least enslaved by its surroundings. It has an ample sense of humour, also, that most humane of gifts" (12). Significantly, Roberts ascribes to her qualities rarely attributed to bears: tolerance and humour. The bear, because it is near-human, is the appropriate representative and teacher of nature. Kroof, being a superior bear, is the suitable bear to fill this important role. Roberts draws attention to Kroof's intelligence and curiosity, which are piqued by the ribbon of scarlet Miranda wears on her neck:

> This was a puzzle to all the folk of the wood, continually reminding them that this quiet-flitting creature did not really belong to the wood at all, but to the great woman with the red about her head, whose axe made so vexing a clamour amid the trees. As for Kroof, the bear, that bit of scarlet so interested her that one day, being curious, she came much nearer than she intended. (50)

Kroof's curiosity and her human-like characteristics make contact with Miranda both possible and, in the context of the story, plausible.

Accepting the relationship that develops between Kroof and Miranda requires the suspension of disbelief by the reader. Roberts gives what he believes is a logical basis for their initial contact and subsequent relationship, maternal instinct: "As sometimes happens in an affection which runs counter to the lines of kinship, Kroof seemed more passionately devoted to the child than she had been to her own cub" (89). Roberts writes that Miranda is "adopted" by Kroof (86). This adoption results in a bond more solid than if Miranda had been born to Kroof: "Cubs might come, and cubs might go: but the love of Kroof and Miranda was a thing that rested unchanging"(128).

The second phase of Miranda's education occurs during her period of contact with Kroof and the other inhabitants of the forest. The impact of the adoption is that Kroof "tried to teach Miranda many things which it is held good to know among the folk of the ancient forest" (91). "[U]nder Kroof's tutelage" (93) Miranda "acquired innumerable secrets of forestlore" (89).

Kroof teaches Miranda to coexist peacefully with nature and other species in the forest.

Not only does Miranda learn secrets of the forest, as Roberts suggests, her kinship with Kroof provides invaluable protection from ferocious animals such as the panthers who are a constant, predatory threat to the human characters. The animals recognize in Miranda a keener power than theirs and one that is not found in other humans who have come into the forest, usually to hunt. Roberts, through a panther, notes,

> he recognized some sort of power and prerogative in Miranda herself, some right of sovereignty, as it were, which had made it distinctly hard for him to attack her even while she had no other defence than her disconcerting gaze. (82)

The panther recognizes a natural hierarchy, although Miranda as yet does not.

The sovereignty that the forest animals ascribe to Miranda is immaturely interpreted by her as an ability to tame the wild animals, to cleanse them of killing and death. Miranda befriends the animals in the woods and creates what Roberts labels the "Pax Mirandae." The animals respect her and eventually go so far as not to kill "in her presence, so that a perpetual truce, as it were, came at last to rule within eyeshot of her inescapable gaze" (128). To maintain this state is unnatural among animals, yet they uphold it for Miranda's sake. She thus becomes unaccustomed to death of any kind: "The truce which she had created about her--the Pax Mirandae--had so long kept her eyes from the hated sight of blood that she had forgotten death, and did not more than half believe in pain" (149). But this truce, created by Miranda, is contrived and unnatural. That Miranda creates the unnatural truce shows that Kroof is unable to educate Miranda fully. She cannot survive in the woods independently, without Kroof's protection.

Kroof enables Miranda to live in the forest without fear and teaches her "many things which it is held good to know" (91) about the forest; however, Kroof is unable to help Miranda distinguish between killing for the survival of her species and killing for unnecessary domination and power over many species. Miranda initially believes, because of her power over the animals, that she can alter their instinctual desire for other animals as food. When Kroof kills a rabbit, Miranda's response is "flaming indignation" (125). While animals do not kill around her, they still kill just out of her sight. Even "the philosophical Kroof strolled back discreetly to where the hare was buried . . . and ate it with great satisfaction" (127). Clearly Miranda's education and growth as a human being are incomplete, as is her understanding of animals.

Roberts suggests both that Miranda's maturation has been impeded by her close relationship with Kroof (and the other animals) and that she is psychologically naive. The effect of her life in the forest and Kroof's tutoring is that Miranda does not see the animals as they are, but instead substitutes them for her absent human community. Kroof provides Miranda with a restricted understanding of and respect for the natural world, but there is a limit to Kroof's ability to educate Miranda. Roberts writes,

> Miranda had regarded the folk of the ancient wood as a gentle people, living for the most part in a voiceless amity. Her seeing eyes quite failed to see the unceasing tragedy of the stillness. She did not guess that the furtive folk, whom she watched about their business went always with fear at their side and death lying in wait at every turn. She little dreamed that, for most of them, the very price of life itself was the ceaseless extinguishing of life. (124)

Miranda does not see the hardship and struggle that animals endure to survive. The effect of being ignorant of this struggle is that she ceases to mature. Miranda, even though she is a young woman of seventeen, reminds Dave of a child: "It made him think, somehow, of a smile of a lost child that does not know it is lost" (164). Dave recognizes her immaturity, as well as her beauty, and takes on the task of completing her education.

When Dave enters Miranda's life she is a young woman. But she is a woman who has had very little human contact; a woman who has been nurtured and loved, not only by a human mother, but by a female black bear, a creature who has presumably revealed to her "innumerable secrets of forestlore" (89), secrets only known to animals, but which Roberts does not specify. Dave notes the effect of her life spent in the forest as it is reflected in her demeanor and physical appearance:

> At seventeen she was a woman, mature beyond her years, but strange, with an elfish or a faun-like strangeness: as if a soul not all human dwelt in her human shape. Silent, wild, unsmiling, her sympathies were not with her own kind, but with the wild and silent folk who know not the sweetness of laughter. . . . It was doubtless this unbridgable divergence, combining with her sympathy and subtle comprehension, which secured her mysterious ascendancy in the forest. (146)

Miranda has become animal-like, faun-like, wild, and not all human. The mysterious, human, yet non-human nature of Miranda attracts Dave, who becomes determined to draw her out of her forest community and into a human relationship. In so doing, he takes over the role of teacher from Kroof.

Being neither of the open nor of the forest, young Dave is able to provide the bridge between humanity and nature which Miranda must cross to realize maturity; his role is to help Miranda understand and accept her place in the natural, albeit, hierarchical order of the world. He has acquired much of his wisdom from being in nature and not from human society. Unlike Miranda, who has been taught by Kirstie to be skeptical of human society for its harsh treatment of fellow members, Dave prefers the solitude of nature but believes in human contact: "His mind was growing large, and quiet, and tolerant, among the great solitude" (132). Dave educates Miranda by showing her that humans are essentially the same as bears: "The subject [the similarities between people and bears] was sagaciously chosen. . . . It suggested to her a kind of possible understanding between the world of men and the world of the ancient wood" (189-90). Kroof provides the basis for the link between humanity and nature by allowing Miranda to become a part of the ancient wood. Dave, however, shows her she is human, that she is not a bear however like one she thinks of herself:

> 'our bodies is built a certain way, an' there's no gittin' over Nature's intention. We've got the teeth to prove it, an' the insides, too.--I've read all about it in doctors' books. . . . Fact is . . . we'er built like the bear,--to live on all kinds

> of food, includin' flesh,--an' if we don't git all kinds once in a while, somethin's bound to go wrong.' (222)

(This comparison is made in conjunction with Dave's diagnosis of Kirstie's illness as an iron deficiency). Miranda's convictions are threatened by Dave's logic and his actions. For a brief moment his philosophy has a credibility that she cannot deny. Dave's attitude exemplifies for Miranda a new view of nature:

> 'Nature's put the law onto her, an' onto the painters [sic], an' the foxes an' wolves, the 'coons an' the weasels. An' she's put the same law, only not so heavy, onto the bears, an' also onto humans, what's all built to live on all kinds of food, meat among the rest.' (242-43)

Because of Miranda's love for Kroof, she is unable to comprehend the laws of the natural world and see her mother's cure as simply shunning her vegetarianism and eating meat, a cure not offensive to the laws of nature. She is, as yet, unable to realize that killing to survive is not equal to gratuitous killing.

The final stage of Miranda's education and maturation comes with the realization that she is human and with her reintegration into human society. Roberts writes that "she felt the need of humanity cravingly, though not understandingly, at her heart" (262). Miranda recognizes her humanity when she must choose who will live: Kroof or Dave. By choosing Dave, Miranda confirms her integration with humanity. Kroof's death also symbolically signals the end of Miranda's belief that she can live only in the ancient wood and of her naive belief in the "Pax Mirandae." By causing Kroof's death, she accepts being fully human and is harshly brought to maturation: "'Oh Dave! she cried, in a piteous voice, 'take mother and me away from this place; I don't want to live at the clearing any more. You've killed the old life I love'" (275). The "old life" is not only life with Kroof, but also the belief that she Miranda is above the laws of nature that make it sometimes necessary to kill.

From Kroof Miranda learns that within certain limits a "Pax Hominis" can be developed by abandoning the conquering mentality in favor of the hunter's view. She shares Kroof's lessons with Dave and shows him a new way of life:

> But while Dave was labouring so assiduously, and, as he fancied, so subtly, to mould and fashion Miranda, she all unawares was moulding him. Unconsciously his rifle and his traps were losing zest for him; and the utter solitude of his camp beyond the Quah-Davic began to have manifest disadvantages. (206)

Miranda shows Dave another possible way to live--harmoniously with nature and without hunting animals for profit. As teachers, Kroof and Dave have enabled Miranda to establish a reciprocal and non-detrimental relationship with nature--a nature she has learned to love and respect and to take from it only what she and her species require to survive.

In *The Heart of the Ancient Wood* Roberts goes beyond illustrating that man and bear are both influenced by nature, as he did in *Thirteen Bears*, to promote a respect for the natural world. The depiction of Kroof is unlike Roberts' other portrayals of wild animals, including the bears in *Thirteen Bears*. In *Thirteen Bears* the bears have no direct influence on the human characters. Through the relationship between Miranda and Kroof, Roberts portrays, realistically, an interactive union between a human being and nature which exceeds mere compatibility, a union which Roberts would have us believe is essential for our mutual survival. This goes beyond Thorpe, Faulkner, Mailer, and even Seton. They suggest compatibility, but the message is put into action and becomes the focus in *The Heart of the Ancient Wood*. As we will see in the next chapter, loving a bear can also lead to self-healing. Marian Engel takes the human-bear relationship one step further.

CHAPTER SIX

SELF-ACTUALIZATION THROUGH LOVING A BEAR: MARIAN ENGEL'S *BEAR*

Marian Engel's *Bear* provides a distinctly female perspective on the coming-of-age story. However, Lou, the protagonist, is not a young, naive girl, like Miranda, but a middle-aged woman. Nor is the bear she encounters as wild and maternally protective as Kroof; it is tame, male, and her lover. Whereas Kroof assisted Miranda's maturation during her childhood in the woods, Bear, by becoming Lou's "lover," during one summer, allows Lou to mature and escape the naiveté and psychological immaturity that for many years has impeded her growth. Unlike Faulkner's "The Bear" and Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam?*, in which young men are sent out into the wilderness to kill bears to acquire trophies as affirmation of their masculinity, in *Bear*, Lou on her journey into the wilderness does not kill a bear, but, instead, loves one, attempts to have sexual intercourse with it, nurtures it, and in the process, nurtures herself.

Most of the stories I have discussed have a bear and an insightful "bear-educated" human character (the "hunter" type) which together teach and assist the growth, integration, and maturation of the protagonists: Sam, Dave, and, as we will see in Momaday's *The Ancient Child*, Grey. Lou has the benefit of an older woman to guide her: the Native woman Lucy, whose name implies light. *Lou-see* helps Lou through her delayed rite of passage and to the discovery of her own relation to the world. Lou and Bear's relationship has a mythological precedent in Native oral stories, such as the "Girl who Married Bear" and in European folk tales such as "East of the Sun." In both stories women have the aid of an older woman guiding them through their experiences.

Bear recounts the development of the relationship between Lou and Bear and the corresponding growth and maturation of Lou throughout the experience. After examining the critical response to the novel, I shall explore several aspects of the Lou-Bear relationship: its inception, its development, and, most important, its impact on Lou. The relationship with Bear gives Lou the opportunity to renew her body, mind, and imagination. It provides her with strength for her return to life in Toronto.

Critics of *Bear* suggest that the novel is a distinctly female journey to maturation. Unlike the male maturation stories considered, in which the hunt and the kill are key to a successful journey, in Engel's story the key to success is to love the quarry fully, not to kill it. At the foundation of the journey in *Bear*, writes Donald Hair, is "a romance, and . . . the conventional action of romance--the quest in search of treasure which is guarded by a monster--lies behind the action of this novel" (34). One might add that the treasure Lou seeks is essentially herself. The only thing between the "Toronto" Lou and the "real" Lou is the experience with a bear. Lou's journey "into the wilderness becomes a metaphor for self-exploration" (Cowen 76). "Both voyagers," Cowen notes, in a comparison of Lou with Marlow of *Heart Of Darkness*, "move from a decorous and secure civilization to a primitive setting in which whatever restraints exist are to be found within the individual" (73). Lou does go on a journey, leaving the city behind. But, as we will see, Lou moves to a locale more conducive to her emotional requirements than the one she left.

In *Women who Run with the Wolves*, Clarissa Pinkola Estes provides another possible perspective or reason for a woman's journey into the wilderness: a journey for a woman develops a relationship with her repressed feral nature as "an essential part of woman's individuation. In order to execute this, a woman must go into the dark, but at the same time she must not be irreparably trapped, captured, or killed on her way there or back" (44). Lou's journey is a journey of individuation. She goes to Cary Island intent on changing herself. It is Lou's attempt "to escape the shaming moment of realization. The mole would not be forced to admit that it had been intended for an antelope" (3). In this regard *Bear* resembles, to extend Estes' insights, some of the great tales such "as the Gaelic 'Beauty and the Beast . . . The Crescent Moon Bear,' [where] finding the way back to one's rightful psychic order begins with the feeding of or the caring for a lonely and/or injured woman, man or beast" (Estes 272-73). For Lou, finding the right psychic order begins with the opportunity to care for a bear.

Critical articles on *Bear* concentrate on Lou's sexual relationship with the bear, exploring the psychology behind the act. Because the bestiality is portrayed realistically, it is sometimes viewed as morally reprehensible and, as Adele Wiseman has pointed out, could set "the alarm system of taboos ajangling" (6). The acerbic assessment of *Bear* by Scott Symons takes this position even further, stating that Lou's sex with Bear is just "lust . . . parading itself as virtue" (7). Although Symons' outrage and disgust are not warranted, his reaction is predictable because of the graphic descriptions of bestiality.

Most critics, however, accept and attempt to comprehend Lou's love of Bear: Margery Fee sees *Bear* as a feminist denouncement of male domination; Corral Ann Howells sees *Bear* as pastoral pornography; Patricia Monk sees *Bear* as a Jungian archetype and shares her assessment of *Bear* with Elspeth Cameron who sees the sexual relations in the novel as the "integration of an alienated personality through contact with a vital natural world" (Cameron 93). Given the sexual encounters Lou experiences with men, these arguments lead to the question: why not a bear? As a lover, Bear is near perfect; he is caring and considerate of her needs:

> The bear, it seems, allows her to give her eroticism free play. He does not dominate her. She frees and nurtures him. Outside the power struggles implicit in all human relationships, she can discover what heterosexual love might be like if it were reciprocal and equal, and more important, that she herself possesses the ability to project this 'ideal' love. (Fee 24)

Their relationship, I would suggest, is not reciprocal, nor is it an example of ideal heterosexual love. Sex with Bear is, in effect, masturbation. Lou is the only beneficiary, although she attempts to convince herself otherwise. Love in *Bear* is a solipsistic projection of Lou's own imagination. Lou imagines real, perfect, reciprocal love; but the fact is, Bear is a bear, not her lover. Bear neither accepts nor projects love. Rather, as I will discuss, he is very much like a lump of clay out of which Lou creates this lover.

Critical attention has ignored what seems to me the significant aspect of this novel--the presentation and manipulation of facts. The epigram to Marian Engel's *Bear* reads: "Facts become art through love, which unifies them and lifts them to a higher plane of reality; and in landscape, this all-embracing love is expressed by light." An addendum to this epigram is needed: the imagination. Lou's imagination changes the facts. Love and imagination are blurred together: to imagine is to love. Love alters facts, thereby creating art. As Shakespeare notes in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,

> Such tricks hath strong imagination,
> That if it would but apprehend some joy,
> It comprehends some bringer of that joy.
> Or in the night, imagining some fear,
> How easy is a bush supposed a bear. (5.1.18-22)

To dwell on the fact that Lou attempts to develop a sexual relationship with a bear (which on the surface suggests a story of a psychologically unbalanced women) is to overlook the more significant fact that it is her imagination and her need for self-integration that makes the relationship possible.

The novel depicts the process through which Lou discovers a new, liberating perspective of herself and the world she inhabits. This process occurs over the course of one summer and is first aided by the old woman, Lucy, and then fully realized through the developing relationship she has with the bear. Lou's maturation, like Ike's, D.J.'s and Miranda's, goes through stages which correspond to the stages of her relationship with the bear.

Before her encounter with Bear, Lou is suffering physical and psychological decay. She is an archivist who specializes in examining the material facts, the extant remains of people and institutional property, or as she calls it, the trivia "which she used to remind herself that long ago the outside world had existed, that there was more to today than yesterday" (2). Her job has affected her physically and psychologically; her work has dehumanized her, made her mole-like:

> [F]or although she loved old shabby things, things that had already been loved and suffered, objects with a past, when she saw that her arms were slug-pale and her fingerprints grained with old, old ink, that the detritus with which she bedizened her bulletin board was curled and valueless, when she found that her eyes would no longer focus in the light, she was always ashamed, for the image of the Good Life long ago stamped on her soul was quite different from this, and she suffered in contrast. (12)

Identifying with and projecting her thoughts onto the valueless detritus, Lou recognizes her own alienation and suffering. Her decaying body signals the condition of her impaired imagination and emotions. Physical well-being is closely associated with mental well-being. A sensor for the instinctive psyche, according to Estes, the body can be seen as "an informational network, a messenger with myriad communication systems--cardiovascular, respiratory, skeletal, autonomic, as well as emotive and intuitive" (200).

When Lou leaves her burrow-like existence in Toronto, one that has suffocated and stifled her imagination, she senses an immediate release; memories start to surface, and her imagination is awakened: "'I have an odd sense', she wrote on a postcard to the Director, 'of being reborn'" (19). Her body also signals the completion of her journey, and by the end of the novel she admires its tautness; "she seemed to have the body of a much younger woman. The sedentary fat had gone" (134). Not only has Lou suffered physical decay, but her focus, also reflected by her profession, was literal and narrow: "her eyes would no longer focus in the light" (12). Her ability to rely on her senses had diminished. She is no longer able to discern clearly what is fact.

Right from the beginning of *Bear* we are confronted with the issue of what is a fact. Material history, as Lou the archivist suggests, is misleading because the extant remains are selectively gathered by successors and cannot be entirely trusted. Speaking from her professional experience Lou says,

> The Canadian tradition was, she had found, on the whole, genteel. Any evidence that an ancestor had performed any acts other than working and praying was usually destroyed. Families handily became respectable in retrospect but it was, as she and the Director often mourned, hell on history. (14)

The central problem of her profession is how does one reconstruct what has been selectively eliminated? How does one trust facts? When Lou is notified that she is to go to Cary Island to research and catalogue the contents in the house, she looks at the facts. She finds out the island was formally obtained in 1834; Colonel Cary was appointed magistrate for northern District in 1836; he died in 1869 at age ninety. She finds that the house "had no secrets. It spoke only of a family who did not want to be common clay, who feared more than anything being lost to history" (139). This trip to Cary Island provides Lou the opportunity to see the facts in a new, broader light.

The account of Lou's journey to Cary Island is entwined with allusions to the spirit of her adventurous predecessors, foreshadowing her extraordinary experience. A reassuring instinctual *déjà vu* permeates her arrival; she has "sharp memories of being here before" (19). Moreover it is Lou herself who is looking for and receptive to new experiences, as is suggested by the vague antecedent to "it" in the following passage: "Everyone wants to be Robinson Crusoe and to be a half-hatched Robinson Crusoe is almost unbearable. If the experience is not to be taken away I must begin on *it* at once, she thought" (42; emphasis added). Lou's quest has purpose, to find herself. She seizes on the experience; she drives it. Lou is anxious to make her experience on Cary Island memorable. Like D.J. and Ike, Lou's struggle is to disregard what is rational and embrace what is instinctual, regardless of where it may lead. She shares this voyager spirit with the first Cary who came to Canada, so the facts tell us, in search of the unknown.

At the outset of her journey, Lou projects her narrow preconceptions of the facts onto her surroundings. She fancies herself venturing into the wilderness. Coming as she does from metropolitan Toronto, she imagines she is deserted and isolated. But the setting of *Bear* is not inhospitable wilderness. Homer, the man who looks after the Cary estate, tells her so: "You're not so far out" (21). "Cary Island, they had all found out, was no longer an isolated outpost on a lonely river; it had been transformed by automobiles, motorboats, long holidays, and snowmobiles" (14). Lou visualizes the island differently; she is concerned with the

> magical forms around her, the way rock ruggedness quickly converted to sand and birch, and islands no bigger than sandbars were crowned with shuttered old green cottages that looked lost and abandoned at this time of year. In this country, she thought, we had winter lives and summer lives of completely different quality. (21)

However, the Cary house is not a lost, abandoned cottage, as she expects. Earmarked for preservation by the government, it is a relic of Canadian history, on property the government will not permit to be divided into cottage lots, as the Cary relatives desire. According to the lawyer's account, "The house was no log cabin. It had six rooms, one of which was a library. There were many sofas, many tables, many chairs. . . . She felt everything was going to be comfortable" (18). Its octagonal design, a Fowler design, was meant to correspond with the science of phrenology and as Lou prophetically notes, foreshadowing her mental awakening, "its phrenological designer thought it good for the brain" (36).

There is a clear dichotomy between Engel's portrayal of the facts and Lou's perception and expectations of the facts, particularly of the bear. This novel is not set in the wilderness, as Lou initially perceives, but in cottage country. Lou is not suffering the hardships of surviving in the wilderness and living by her wits, but instead she is housed in a mansion. The bear is not a wild beast; he is very old, very fat and, as Lou finds out, very tame. Homer points out,

> Jeepers, no. It's just . . . well, he's just a plain old bear, and he's been on that chain for so many years there's no telling what would happen if you let him loose. He might kill you, he might just sit there, he might walk across the yard and take a leak. (41)

Lou's first views of the bear come in two, seemingly contradictory, forms: the old, fat, chained bear in the yard and the wild mythical bear in the book notes. Throughout the novel Lou struggles to reconcile the two forms. This struggle is notably reflected in the books Lou is required to catalogue: on one hand, there are the books containing rational, factual information and, on the other, there are the unexpected little notes about bears stuck in the books. As Lou begins to settle into her new surroundings and to contemplate the only inhabitant, Bear, Engel writes,

> she was deposited in one of the great houses of the province, at the beginning of the summer season and in one of the great resort areas. She was somewhat isolated, but she had always loved her loneliness. And the idea of the bear struck her as joyfully Elizabethan and exotic. (29)

Lou's initial perception of the bear reflects her bookish focus; she is unable to see Bear unencumbered by her preconceptions. At first she does not see the bear as the pathetic animal he is; instead, he is reflected through a prism of myth, science, and folklore.

The bear quotations provided by the books in the Cary library reinforce those preconceptions. There is a disparity between the bears described in the notes and the bear she looks after. It is the one fact that cannot be catalogued. The only way Lou can begin to understand the bear's existence is to start with the facts: "So, she thought, maybe I'll start on the books first, work from the known to the unknown" (32). Unable to rely on her senses, she starts with the books. This process leads her to the discovery of the representation of the bear in literature, folklore, and mythology:

> Ursus Arctos, ours, orso, Bär, Bjorn: inhabits the mountainous districts of the Alps, Pyrenees and Arctic Circle. . . .The Laplanders venerate it and call it the Dog of God. The Norwegians say, "The Bear has the strength of ten men and the senses of twelve." They never call it by its true name lest it ravage their crops. (53)

For humans, as evidenced in the numerous notes, bears are emblematic of the diversity of ritualistic and mythological associations given one species. It is from these established associations that Lou is trying to make a break. Lou moves between learning the bear lore and learning about Bear as a fact.

Lou's preconceptions of the bear as a vicious beast, "something fierce . . . snuffling you out to snuff you out" (34), are modified as she discovers the bear excerpts in the Cary library. The books Lou catalogues epitomize a rational "early nineteenth-century" response to the world, as Engel notes:

> [Lou] was presented with a sharp and perhaps typical early nineteenth-century mind: Encyclopaedias, British and Greek history, Voltaire, Rousseau, geology and geography, geophysical speculation, the more practical philosophers, sets and sets of novelists. (37-8)

Yet out of these books fall the clippings of irrational and, at times, marvelous responses to the bear: "The Laplanders venerate it and call it the Dog of God" (53); "To the Lapps, the bear is King of the Beasts. Hunters who kill must live three days alone" (64); Waldo the Rutherian prince was "rescued by a bear, whose droppings are gold" (71). These examples typify inexplicable but human responses to bears. Lou thinks, after several of these notes have fallen out of several books,

> What the Institute needed was not a nice house, or a collection of zoological curiousa but material to fill in the history of settlement in the region . . . and here was Cary sending her little notes about--bears. She wanted to pick up each of his books and shake them till the spines fell off. Instead, she carefully filed and dated his note, marking its envelope with the name of the book it fell from. Perhaps when she was very old she would return and make a mystical acrostic out of the dates and titles of these books and believe she had found the elixir of life. (52)

Although the messages appear to hold the key to life for her, the notes do not relate an explicit message to her that she can yet comprehend.

After she has come across and read the numerous bear notes hidden in the books, Lou ponders her assumptions about animals, in chapter IX, as she explores her own history and the nature of the representation of animals in literature she remembers from childhood books:

> She had read many books about animals as a child. Grown up on the merry mewlings of Beatrix Potter, A. A. Milne, and Thorton W. Burgess; passed on Jack London, Thompson Seton, or was it Seton Thompson, with the animal tracks in the margin? Grey Owl and Sir Charles Goddamn Roberts that her grandmother was so fond of. Wild ways and furtive anthropomorphic uniforms of tyrants, heroes, sufferers, good little children, gossipy housewives. At one time it had seemed impossible that the world of parents and librarians had been inhabited by creatures other than animals and elves. The easy way out, perhaps, since Freud had discovered infantile sexuality.
>
> Yet she had no feeling at all that either the writers or the purchasers of these books knew what animals were about. She had no idea what animals were about. They were creatures. They were not human. She supposed that their functions were defined by the size, shape and complications of their brains. She supposed that they led dim, flickering, inarticulate psychic lives as well.
>
> He, she saw, lay in the weak sun with his head on his paws. This did not lead her to presume that he suffered or did not suffer. That he would like striped or spotted pajamas. Or that he would ever write a book about humans clothed in ursomorphic thoughts. A bear is more an island than a man, she thought. To a human. (59-60)

Lou is beginning to recognize that she cannot know animals, particularly Bear, from the books she has come to rely on. Neither are the books able to clarify the factual framework within which she has existed so far. Lou recognizes that the bears depicted by Seton and Roberts as knowable, tyrannical, heroic, and wild, are people dressed in animal clothing and not real bears. Bear, Lou notes, is unknowable and certainly nothing like the images reflected in her childhood memories. She fails, however, to grasp the symbolic intent of the bears she encountered in those childhood stories.

The bear is a contextual symbol for Lou. Its meaning for Lou is always shifting depending on her state of mind and her particular needs. Lou soon discovers that she "could paint any face on him that she wanted, while his actual range of expression was a mystery" (72). The bear is a living symbol, and, as a symbol, as Goethe suggests, it "remains always infinitely active and unapproachable in the image, and even if expressed in all languages, still would remain inexpressible" (Goethe; qtd. in Abrams 208). Only when her imagination is liberated is she able to view the world unencumbered and see Bear as a literal fact. As the bear notes fall from the books she is cataloguing (and as the droppings fall from the bear), she becomes liberated from her past and able to face an uncertain future.

Although Lou's initial reaction to Bear is a literary response, a product of her childhood and the book notes, the bear she sees is none of those things. She sees only a reflection of herself. She draws on all the facts she had heard and learned: "She thought, you have these ideas about bears: they are toys, or something fierce and ogreish in the woods, following you at a distance, snuffling you out to snuff you out. But this bear is a lump" (34), a lump that no doubt needs to be licked into to shape, a lump like clay she can mold and form. Lou first gives shape to the bear as she notes: "An unprepossessing creature, this bear, she decided. Not at all menacing. Not a creature of the wild, but a middle-aged woman defeated to the point of being daft, who had stayed night after night waiting for her husband for so long that time had ceased to exist and there was only waiting" (36). Initially, what Lou sees in the bear is a reflection of herself, an "unprepossessing . . . defeated . . . middle-aged woman." Through giving form to and discovering the bear, Lou gives form to and discovers herself.

The first step Lou takes towards self-discovery is to abandon her self-doubt and rational, literal approach to life. She learns to abandon these by caring for Bear and learning to enjoy his smell. When she hears that she is to look after Bear as part of her duties while on the Cary Island, she is dubious. Trying different approaches to get to know Bear, she treats Bear like a dog, as Homer has told her to do:

> 'I don't hold any brief for bears. I don't like pet animals much, to tell the truth. I like a dog if he's a good retriever, and the odd time I've taken in some critter that's been hurt . . . I don't know where they got it, there aren't any bear around here . . . You treat it like a dog, Joe said. I asked him before he went away. But don't get too friendly before the bear knows you because he's old, nobody remembers how old . . . Joe's left a hundred pounds of dog chow in the shed'. (26-7)

She finds that treating Bear as she would a dog is not the right response, as Bear himself signals to her: "She stood as far back from him as she could, and held out a stiffened hand. He licked it with a long, ridged, curling tongue, but when she tried to pat his head he swung it sideways and away from her" (42).

Lucy provides Lou with the key to caring for Bear. When she confides to Lucy that "'I don't think I really know how to take care of him'" (48), Lucy reassures her, saying, '"Bear your friend'" (49). "Lucy's face crinkled with some inconceivable merriment. She did not look one hundred years old, only eternal. 'Shit with the bear', she said. 'He like you, then. Morning, you shit, he shit. Bear lives by smell. He like you'" (49). The thought of shitting with the bear at first shocks Lou, but soon it becomes a daily ritual, a way of maintaining her friendship with him. Seton used smell in his bear stories to imply how removed humans are from nature. Engel uses it to illustrate the change in Lou. Smelling the bear begins the reawakening of Lou's senses and her instinct.

As Catharine McClellen points out in *The Girl Who Married the Bear*, bear excrement has significance, "rather strong spiritual powers . . . [and] a comic shock value" (8). In a story recounted by McClellen, a young girl out picking berries jumps over bear shit, cursing it as she maneuvers around it. This curse shows disrespect for the bear people, and consequently she suffers the wrath of the bear's spiritual power. Regardless of the smell, bear shit should be revered.

The European response to excrement has been explored in association with bears and also in association with a neurotic concern for order and cleanliness. Alan C. Elms, in "The Three Bears: Four Interpretations," argues that this children's story is the most striking example of the anal retentive personality. That bears are the animal used is not coincidental: "Even untrained observers . . . had good reasons to associate bears with anal concerns" (Elms 268). The reasoning goes something like this: a bear hibernates and does not defecate for a long period of time, holding in its excrement. As an archival librarian, Lou's concerns are with order and cleanliness and suggest her anal, uptight, rigid personality. When she comes to love that "Randy

Pong," (140) by accepting the smell of bear shit, Lou in a sense is able to transcend her anal personality.

Lou takes the second step toward self-discovery as she begins to abandon her "facts" and rely on her own instincts. Once she learns to shit with Bear, Lou's response to Bear becomes more instinctual and maternal. She mothers the decrepit bear, treating him as a neglected child, hoping he will return her unconventional love. Lou takes Bear for a swim, and Engel notes, "Afterwards on the bank, he shook and wet her through. She laughed, let his chain go entirely and dashed to the house. Found an old brush in the woodshed, sat down and curried him. What a mother I am, she thought" (51). And,

> If the day was warm, she took the bear to the water. He showed no doggish enthusiasm when she went to get him, simply followed her docilely when she tugged his chain. Then, in the water, sat like a near-sighted baby placidly enjoying the return to liquid existence. (54)

The maternal feelings Lou has for the bear exhibit the condition of her own instinctual self, an aspect of herself that needs nurturing. Because she is seeking reciprocity, self-fulfillment, she molds Bear to please herself. She is at this stage, mothering herself.

Lou's relationship with the bear is a creative and nurturing act. It grows and constantly takes on new meaning for Lou and the reader: "Her relationship with the bear is emblematic of her tentative exploration of, gradual immersion in, and full acceptance of the primitive forces in the world and herself" (Cameron 87). As well, her encounter with the bear is emblematic of her encounter with her own imagination, an imagination stunted, atrophied by her job and a world where human contact has led to disappointment. Lou tries to understand what is happening to her in very literary ways; she imagines herself a writer agonizing over her novel. This approach is the only way for Lou, who has little experience with life other than vicariously through books, to approach Bear:

> She went upstairs again and went through the cards she had made. The library was conventional, and the personal information about Cary was meagre. It was too early in her search to give them any meaning, and perhaps they would never have any meaning. She felt like some French novelist who, having discarded plot and character, was left to build an abstract structure, and was too tradition-bound to do so. (84)

The struggle Lou identifies in this passage is one with her own conventional response to the world around her, which she extends to Bear and her search to give him meaning.

The relationship Lou creates moves from nurturing to sexual, the next step of her female initiation. Bear as a lover is perfect because he is a mirror, a recipient of her desires:

> She loved the bear. She felt him to be wise and accepting. She felt sometimes that he was God. He served her. As long as she made stool beside him in the morning, he was ready whenever she spread her legs to him. He was rough and tender, assiduous, patient, infinitely, it seemed to her, kind.
>
> She loved the bear. There was a depth in him she could not reach, could not probe and with her intellectual fingers destroy. She lay on his belly, he batted her gently with claws; she touched his tongue with hers and felt its fatness. She explored his gums, his teeth that were almost fangs. She turned back his black lips with her fingers and ran her tongue along the ridge of his gums. (118)

In her mind, Bear has gone from childlike to godlike, with depth. He has been transformed for Lou, just as the bears were for Jim

Doggett and Ike. The bear she perceives is considerate of her sexual needs in contrast with the men of her sexual experiences. Reflecting on those encounters, Lou realizes "what she disliked in men was not their eroticism, but their assumption that women had none. Which left women with nothing to be but housemaids" (112). Sex with Bear, although perverse, heals Lou by allowing her to respond to the world in an uncharacteristically, non-rational, distinctly feminine way, as Margery Fee notes: "the only social models [Lou] can discover or imagine for identity are male. Although she aspires to the condition of the dominant male subject, she cannot finally adopt it, because it requires that she become dominant, a repudiation, for her, of her female experience" (Fee 22). Moreover, as Howells notes, Marian Engel "turns upside down the power fantasies of conventional male-oriented pornography, for here it is not the woman who is tamed and transformed into a sex object, it is the bear" (109), the epitome of Lou's creativity. The bear then, as Howells points out, is the perfect object of fantasy and as "a partner in the woman's dream journey, as it tracks through unexplored forbidden territory, allowing her to discover her own repressed primitive self and to make connections with the natural world outside" (111).

The sexual relationship with Bear gives Lou both pleasure and purpose. It provides the connection with the natural world that she craves; it allows her to become, if only momentarily, a bear. When Lou takes Bear swimming, she fantasizes:

> Bear, take me to the bottom of the ocean with you, bear, swim with me, bear, put your arms around me, enclose me, swim, down, down, down with me.
>
> Bear, make me comfortable in the world at last. Give me your skin.
>
> Bear, I want nothing but this from you. Oh, thank you, bear. I will keep you safe from strangers and peering eyes forever.
>
> Bear, give up your humility. You are not a humble beast. You think your own thoughts. Tell them to me.
>
> Bear, I cannot command you to love me, but I think you love me. What I want is for you to continue to be, and to be something to me. No more. Bear. (112-13)

The bear she has created through her sexual fantasies is the image of what she wishes to become. Lou commands Bear, and by implication herself, to "give up [her] humility" to "think [her] own thoughts" and to "continue to be." The bear acts as a conduit for her self-healing, both spiritual and physical. She refuses to see the pathetic animal, and sees only a creation of her imagination, an imagination brought to life by the physical presence of Bear. She sees it as embodying the world from which she has been alienated and, having sex with it, as the connection between his and her world. This connection becomes the source of her spiritual renewal.

Lou deludes herself to the point where she believes she can cross into the mythological realms where animals and humans can unite. She is comforted by the thought that others, even if only in mythology, have tried: "A note fell out of the book: *The offspring of a woman and a bear is a hero, with the strength of a bear and the cleverness of a man,--Old Finnish* *legend.* She cried with joy" (99). Her sexual relationships with Homer and the director leave her unfulfilled. "[S]he felt nothing" (126). Her feeling and belief that she can unite with Bear grow stronger as their relationship progresses:

> She lay naked, panting, wanting to offer him her two breasts and her womb, almost believing that he could impregnate her with the twin heroes that would save her tribe. But she had to wait until night fell before it was safe to see him. (121)

Bear, however, abruptly ends her fantasy in the final stage of her journey. Lou finally sees Bear as he is at the moment she attempts sexually to cross the human-animal barrier, but Bear thwarts their copulation. He gets an erection; she hopes he will mount her, but instead he swipes her, making "one long, red, congealing weal from her shoulder to buttock. I shall keep that, she thought. And it is not the mark of Cain" (134). To Lou the scar is not an indication of evil, perversion, or punishment, but instead a reminder that the bear is an animal and she is human. Estes' discussion about fairy tale violence casts light on the significance of Lou's scar:

> It is more than reasonable to ask why there are such brutal episodes in fairy tales. It is a phenomenon found worldwide in mythos and folklore. The gruesome conclusion . . . is typical of fairy-tale endings wherein the spiritual protagonist is unable to complete an attempted transformation. (219)

Bear's behavior is, perhaps, a typical bear response, and the injury he inflicts may be just his idea of play. To Lou, however, it painfully illustrates that she is, indeed, a human being and he a bear. It is an unpredictable action that Lou did not create for Bear, and marks the first time she sees him in a true light, as he is. At the same time, she is aware that what she has done or attempted to do is not without significance:

> What had passed to her from him she did not know. Certainly it was not the seed of heroes, or magic, or an astounding virtue, for she continued to be herself. But for one strange, sharp moment she could feel in her pores and the taste of her own mouth that she knew what the world was for. She felt not that she was at last human, but that she was at last clean. Clean and simple and proud. (136-37)

Just as Bear in that instant continued to be himself, Lou learns that he "is no mythological creature, and she must live in the actual world. Honestly, without illusion or self-deception" (Cowen 87). Lou has come to accept herself.

The experience and relationship with Bear give her the opportunity to renew her body and mind and provide her with a connection to the natural world. Lou becomes aware of the instinctual, maternal, sexual, animal-human bond that is in nature and part of herself. This awareness is made obvious at the end of the novel as she sits on the boat making her way back to Toronto:

> She felt tender, serene. She remembered evenings of sitting by the fire with the bear's head in her lap. She remembered the night the stars fell on her body and burned and burned. She remembered guilt, and a dream she had where her mother made her write letters of apology to the Indians for having had to do with a bear, and she remembered the claw that had healed guilt. She felt strong and pure. (140)

Lou transforms the pain caused by Bear into a symbol of "healed guilt."

Making love to a bear is a creative use of imagination which helps Lou to see "reality as a strange, wonderful, terrible, fantastic world" (Frye 10). The mythology, stories, facts about bears allow Bear to be the catalyst for Lou's self-healing and integration with the natural world. Getting to know Bear is less about stopping destruction of the natural world, as it was in Faulkner, Mailer, and Seton, than about keeping attuned with an instinctual animal aspects within.

In the next chapter, healing and integration remain the focus of the bear's role in the narrative. N. Scott Momaday, however, uses ceremony to help the protagonist with the process of internalizing the power of the bear.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PERMEATING THE HUMAN-BEAR BARRIER: N. SCOTT MOMADAY'S *THE ANCIENT CHILD*

> Yes . . . there is only one story, after all, and it is about the pursuit of man by God, and it is about a man who ventures out to the edge of the world, and it is about his holy quest, and it is about his faithful or unfaithful wife, and it is about the hunting of a great beast. In his paintings others might have seen confusion and chaos, but Set saw the pure elements of the story, and he must be true to the story at all costs. To fail in this would be to lose himself forever. He must be true to the story. (*The Ancient Child* 216)

*

In N. Scott Momaday's *The Ancient Child*, the story of Locke Setman's transformation into a bear is linked with the legend of Devil's Tower, or as it is known by the Kiowa people and Momaday as Tsoai, "rock tree." This Kiowa legend provides the means to understand the portrayal of the bear in *The Ancient Child* and the psychological crisis that introduces Locke Setman (who is called Set) to his "bear power." For Momaday, the bear in the novel is more than a teacher, as it has been in the previous stories I have discussed. It is a healer, because the bear, as Momaday writes in his list of characters, is "the mythic embodiment of wilderness" (n.p.). By becoming a bear, Set becomes whole because he is reconnected to the wilderness.

The key to Set's healing, his transformation into a bear, is accessing the power of the bear and then learning to accept and to achieve control of its destructive characteristics. In an interview with Charles L. Woodard, Momaday explains what he means by the power of the bear as it applies to himself, to the novel, and to its protagonist, Set. Momaday discusses his affiliation with the myth and the dimensions of bear power. He comments that the power of the bear is "difficult to describe":

> There are manifestations of many kinds. There is an energy, an agitation, an anger, perhaps. A power that rises up in you and becomes dominant. The feeling is unmistakable. And you deal with it in various ways. You become very spiritual. You feel a greater kinship with the animal world and with the wilderness. You feel strong when you're most in touch with this bear. You become very intense in your work. And in your life. You accelerate your activity--writing, painting, whatever. You tend to be reckless, careless, self-destructive. You drink too much. You drive too fast. You pick on guys bigger than you are . . . You become a magnificent lover, storyteller--it's just a great burst of vitality. (16)

To access bear power is to feel vitality, according to Momaday. The bear possesses inherently contradictory forces of violence and creativity. These characteristics--energy, agitation, anger, power, recklessness, carelessness, self-destructiveness, sexuality, vitality, creativeness--are what distinguish it from other animals and are the characteristics that give it power and authority and that allow it to be the "mythic embodiment of the wilderness." This is what it is and why it is an effective teacher in Momaday's stories and in Kiowa culture. Moreover, in the story, Set must integrate, accept, and achieve a balance between both the negative, destructive and the positive, healing aspects of the bear.

The representation of this "mythic" bear, as we will see, shifts throughout the novel between pan-cultural attitudes toward the animal and the specific Kiowa legend. The reason for this shifting emphasis on the bear between general and specific knowledge lies in the transformation of Set's character; at the same time, it explains Momaday's gravitation to bears.

In order to understand more fully the characters, structure, and narrative of *The Ancient Child* and its complex presentation of the bear, I will first discuss the legend and Momaday's own interpretation of it in his other works.

The Kiowa "Bear Lodge Legend" explains the significance of Devil's Tower, a giant rock formation in Wyoming. (Devil's Tower stands 5,117 feet above sea level, is 865 feet tall, 1000 feet in diameter at the base and 265 feet across at its highest point.) According to Maurice Boyd in volume II of *Kiowa Voices: Myths, Legends and Folktales*, the myth explains "how the spirit force cared for the Kiowa during their migration into the vast unknown of the prairies. It is an ancient, perhaps the oldest Kiowa legend" (87). The Kiowa were saved from annihilation when threatened by a bear, which they considered to be an "incarnation of evil and of destruction" (93). Momaday explains this nature of the bear:

> It is threatening because the bear is destructive. When he is really upon me, I feel threatened by that destructiveness, and I feel capable of destruction. It is possible for the bear to destroy the boy. The combination is potentially very destructive, just as in the story. The boy became the bear and his sisters were threatened with immediate mayhem. They were greatly imperiled. I would not like to turn into a bear and go with murderous intent after my sisters. That's a frightening thing. I think that the boy must have been beside himself with whatever it was when he found himself transformed and moving toward the destruction of his sisters. I'm sure that he was aware of it, and I'm sure that it must have torn him apart in some ways. But there was nothing he could do about it. And so I sense that when I'm in touch with the bear there is a great potential for disintegration. (Woodard 16-17)

In the legend submitted to Boyd by Gina Pauahty, who was told the story of Devil's Tower by her father, ten girls were playing a game called "the bear and the fruit," in which one girl was selected to guard the fruit while the others tried to steal it. The chosen girl, a member of the Bear cult society, tried to fend off the other girls by pretending to be a bear, biting and scratching them. She told the girls there would be four chases and to pay close attention to the third one, "for hair will begin to grow between my fingers and my toes" (88). When the others complained that she was playing too roughly, she became angry, then turned into a bear and ate all but one girl, who escaped to warn the camp. Although several warriors helped her to escape, the bear pursued them to a little hill: "A voice came from the little hill, saying, 'if you will come this way, I may be able to offer you some protection. At least I will slow down the monster bear so that you will be able to get away'" (91-92). The hill told them to circle it four times, and, as the bear came closer, the hill grew. The rock told them that to protect them forever from the monster, it would put them in the sky, as the constellation Ursa Major, "and there you will always be safe. Other Kiowas will always look up at night and see you in the sky forever" (87-93).

Momaday repeats the following version of the myth of Devil's Tower in most of his work: *The Names, The Way to Rainy Mountain, House Made of Dawn*, and *The Ancient Child.*

> Eight children were there at play, seven sisters and their brother. Suddenly the boy was struck dumb; he trembled and began to run upon his hands and feet. His fingers became claws, and his body was covered with fur. Directly

> there was a bear where a boy had been. The sisters were terrified; they ran, and the bear after them. They came to the stump of a great tree, and the tree spoke to them. It bade them climb upon it, and as they did so it began to rise into the air. The bear came to kill them, but they were beyond its reach. It reared against the trunk and scored the bark all around with its claws. The seven sisters were borne into the sky, and they became the stars of the Big Dipper.
>
> From that moment, so long as the legend lives, the Kiowas have kinsmen in the night sky. Whatever they were in the mountains, they could be no more. However tenuous their well-being, however much they had suffered and would suffer again, they had found a way out of the wilderness (*The Way To Rainy Mountain* 8).

In Momaday's version the gender of the child is changed from female to male. This change is associated with the gender of the teller. The legend is important for both Boyd and Momaday to repeat to preserve tribal memory and the solidarity of the Kiowa people. It commemorates and represents how the Kiowa were helped by what Boyd calls the spirit force, and "so long as the legend lives" the Kiowa's relationship with this force is kept alive. The legend symbolically explains how the Kiowa were helped and protected by the "spirit force" as they pursued migrating buffalo herds on the prairie and during their subsequent encounters with hostile tribes. The girls possibly represent the "seven Kiowa bands at that time" (Boyd 2: 87). The bear symbolically represents "the threat of annihilation" (Boyd 1:10).

As we will see, Momaday's use of the myth of Tsoai, in sequence, reveals a type of renewal, both of the tale and the character who reenacts the legend. Many critics have cited this propensity to repeat stories, with slight variations, among tribal members, as a part of the Native oral tradition that manifests itself in written literature. Penny Petrone proposes that oral traditions are not static, that their "strength lies in their ability to survive through the power of tribal memory and to renew themselves by incorporating new elements" (17). Boyd and Momaday's renditions of the story vary slightly. The gender of the child is the obvious variant because this is Momaday's story.

There is one unanswered question in both versions: what became of the child who became a bear? In Boyd's version this question is not a consideration; the story ends. For Momaday, however, this question, and thus the myth, has personal significance. The myth has been important to Momaday in autobiographical material, then in fictional form. Momaday, like his character Set, sees the story as a counterpart to his own name and his own identity. In his work he seems to be moving toward an answer--Set is the boy who becomes the bear.

In *The Names*, his family memoir, Momaday states that he was given his Indian name, Tsoai-talee, "Rock-Tree Boy" by a storyteller who "believed that a man's life proceeds from his name, in the way that a river proceeds from its source" (n.p.). Having a name associated with the Kiowa legend of the Devil's Tower, writes Momaday, was "to be in Tsoai's presence even before the child could understand what it was, so that by means of the child the memory of Tsoai should be renewed in the blood of the coming-out people" (55). Each time the story is told, the legend is kept alive, and the teller is reminded of his relationship to the story. Momaday sees himself as an embodiment of the story:

> [T]hrough the imaginative process of writing about it, I will know more about myself. And I suppose that's as good a motive for writing as any. I'm curious about the story, but my curiosity stems directly from the fact that I am involved in that story somehow, and I am curious to know as much as I can about it. (Woodard 17)

Momaday's personal association with the myth explains, in part, the importance and predominance of the bear in *The Ancient Child*, as well as in his earlier works *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and *House Made of Dawn*. The representation of the bear in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* is a recapitulation, with no variation, of the Kiowa myth of Tsoai; but in *House Made of Dawn*, the myth is told in conjunction with other bear myths. Momaday uses similar blending in *The Ancient Child*. In order to understand more fully the new portrait of the bear that Momaday creates, I am going to first explore, briefly, the symbolic significance of bear stories in *House Made of Dawn*.

In *House Made of Dawn*, the story of a World War II veteran's attempt to rejoin his native community, Momaday uses the bear in conjunction with the development of the protagonist, Abel. He is described as having the physical attributes of a bear (34, 62), and, like Set in *The Ancient Child*, is associated with the legend of Tsoai. Placed beside this legend are three other bear stories: the European Bear Son tale; the Navajo Bear Maiden legend, told by Abel's friend Ben; and the account of a bear hunt by Abel's grandfather. The bear is also closely associated with nature, as it is in *The Ancient Child*. The bear stories in *House*

Made of Dawn assist Abel in his attempt to reintegrate into his community.

Critics cite the Bear Son tale, the first myth told, as the most important in the novel. Nora Baker Barry explores *House Made of Dawn* as if it were a retelling of the European Bear Son tale in which a woman is captured by a bear and gives birth to its child before escaping. The bear-child grows up strong, leaves his mother, and then partakes in numerous mythical adventures. Like the boy in the myth, Abel is the mythic product of a bear and a woman. Barry suggests that Momaday has incorporated the Bear Son tale into the novel in three ways: "one directly associated with Abel but told by a White woman; one a part of [Abel's] cultural mythos; and one growing out of the actual experience of [Abel's] grandfather's initiation into manhood" (281-2). Barry further suggests that Momaday intertwines these different stories to illustrate that Abel is a "universal hero" (286). "Momaday's interweaving of the Bear's Son motifs . . . makes *House Made of Dawn* a rich tapestry of cross-cultural materials" (286). The frequency of their telling and their context suggest their mythic, regenerating qualities and, consequently, the spiritual renewal of Abel.

The bear stories in *House Made of Dawn* denote spiritual regeneration and physical renewal, as Susan Scarberry-Garcia has pointed out in *Landmarks of Healing*. The most significant use of the bear, she notes, occurs when the Priest of the Sun retells the legend of Tsoai. Through the retelling of the Kiowa legend of Devil's Tower, we are given a story of "historical redefinition of tribal identity" which is "transformative and renewing" (48). Scarberry-Garcia suggests that all the bear stories in the novel present the same idea: "an image of physical and spiritual renewal through contact with the wilderness" (46). She further notes that the last bear story in *House Made of Dawn* is told by Abel's grandfather Francisco. Near death, Francisco recalls his initiation into manhood, an initiation he associates with a bear hunt: "Francisco's slaying of the bear precipitates the development of his personal healing power, power that he rallies in the last day of his life to help Abel continue his spiritual transformation" (Scarberry-Garcia 74). The bear, or the retelling of bear stories, in *House Made of Dawn*, as it is in *The Ancient Child*, is a catalyst for healing.

Renewal in *The Ancient Child* is represented by Set's transformation into bear. Although it also incorporates several bear stories, there is an emphasis on the legend of Devil's Tower. *The Ancient Child* explores the question of what has happened to the boy who became a bear in Tsoai; the novel recreates the mythical transformation of a boy into a bear and in the process of transformation, Set is spiritually healed. He is integrated with his roots, his sacred, tribal bear power.

At several points in the novel, Momaday anticipates Eurocentric skepticism about how a man can become a bear. Thorpe in "Bears and Bear-Hunting" had ridiculed Native belief in transformation when he portrayed bears dancing to a waltz.

Engel's character Lou in *Bear* knew from reading books that a union was possible in a Native belief system, but was ultimately convinced by a bear that a mythic transformation was not possible for her. For Momaday, however,

> Nothing is unnatural, and there is no question of right and wrong. There is merely a moment in the rite of passage, the irresistible accumulation of experience. Moreover, the story is understood and accepted--neither is there any question of condonation--by the audience, which is gathered with hard, interested attention about the centerpiece, the altar, of the story. (43-4)

For Momaday, and in Native ontology in general as it is presented in stories, transformation is possible, even necessary. In this story, the transformation is the "centerpiece, the altar." It is the vertex at which humanity and the spiritual world connect. Transformation, as Jamake Highwater suggests, could be thought of as an experience that "lets us take our bodies with us into the visionary realm . . . and provides us with direct physical contact with the *orendas* [life forces] which appear to us as visions, inspirations, intuitional insights" (88). Set incorporates this life force, represented by the bear, as he progressively becomes aware of its power.

My discussion of the novel will focus on clarifying the centrality of the bear myth and will begin with an examination of the novel's structure and narrative, then of its central characters, Set and Grey--a young woman who, by fantasizing about the western American outlaw Billy the Kid, matures into the medicine woman who helps Set understand his bear power.

The structure of *The Ancient Child* is, as the narrator writes of Set's art, "a composed unity of fragments which is a whole" (132). Set, like Lou, is psychologically shattered and then made whole. This "fragmented" structure is an example of what Paula Gunn Allen in *The Sacred Hoop* has called a vestige from a traditional form of storytelling:

> Traditional American Indian stories work dynamically among clusters of loosely interconnected circles. The focus of action shifts from one character to another as the story unfolds. There is no "point of view" as the term is generally understood, unless the action itself, the story's purpose, can be termed "point of view." (241-42)

In *The Ancient Child*, Momaday weaves together three different narratives and shifting points of view, drawing attention to the act of storytelling. The narrative alternates among these three different stories, between two different characters, and between different myths. The Kiowa myth of Devil's Tower, the first story, gives cohesive meaning to the events of the other two stories: Grey's maturation into a medicine woman and Set's degeneration and his subsequent recovery, which is made possible with Grey's spiritual guidance. The three stories unite when Set is transformed, as in the myth, into a bear. This structural weaving of the narrative is something Momaday has done before. In *The Way to Rainy Mountain* he uses three different voices and storytellers: family stories, stories told by the elders, and Kiowa myth. The effect of using these different stories and storytellers draws attention to the communal, tribal act of storytelling and its healing power.

The titles of each section of *The Ancient Child* prompt the reader to consider the parts of the novel as the various and incomplete elements of a picture: Book one is Planes; Book two, Lines; Book three, Shapes; and Book four, Shadows. In visual art a plane creates boundaries, defines space. Plane is essentially two dimensional, having height and width. Line is the path of a moving point; that is, a mark made by a tool or instrument as it is drawn across a plane surface. Shape is an area that stands out from the space next to or around it because of a defined value, color, or texture. Shadow is the darker value on the surface of a shape that gives the illusion that a certain portion of the shape is turned away from the source of light (Ocvirk 281-86). Together, plane, line, shape, and shadow create a picture. By analogy to a painting, then, Momaday's novel does not have coherent meaning or create a complete picture until read as a whole, to the end. Similarly, Set, as an artist and a human being, goes through a progressive creation of self, finally becoming a bear, with its full personal and cultural context understood by him and the reader.

The planes in the novel determine the course and relationship of the events. Momaday writes of planes while setting the various parameters of the novel:

> Set reels and turns inside himself. He applies color to his brain with a knife. Smoke permeates the medicine bundle; a low heat emanates from it. Dancers touch their feet to the earth. A deranged boy glares from the shadows. An ancient woman inhabits the body of a girl. Death displaces silver, scintillant fish. The bear comes forth. Planes. (123)

In Planes, we are provided the "canvas," the characters and the plot which the narrative explores: Set who is mentally tormented, turning "inside himself" because of a medicine bundle given to him, but the power of which he does not understand; the "deranged boy" (the bear-child); the "bear"; the "ancient woman [who] inhabits the body of a girl" (Grey); and "the medicine bundle."

Lines in the novel refer to and are used in conjunction with Grey as she paints in the sand:

> She would watch the dawn come about, and then she would go out and lift her arms and pray, and she would see to the sunrise, the lines and streaks of the sun extending up and out and down, striking summer to the earth. Kneeling, then, she would draw lines on the earth, describing where she and her man must go. (260)

By this point in the narrative Grey has matured and uses this gesture of drawing lines on the ground for guidance, to help and heal Set. The lines provide the necessary connections between Set, the bear child, and the bear. Grey creates these lines "describing where she and her man must go." Using nature as her guide, "the lines and streaks of the sun extending up and out and down, striking summer to the earth," Grey provides the knowledge and guidance that Set needs to transform himself into a bear.

Shapes, the third section of the novel, describes the indeterminate combination of atmosphere, dancers, their masks, their chanting--all of which suggest verisimilitude: "But the dancers were invisible behind the masks, and gods were visible in them. The gods were real, and they had come from another world. They were the shapes of immortality" (304). The dancers, the characters, remain masked, but are taking shape in the form of gods. They appear real but in reality they remain masked. The transformation is underway in this section; the elements of plane and line have come together and Set learns to control his bear power. The bear is within Set, "visible in the [mask]," but Set remains "invisible behind the mask." The picture is not yet complete.

In Book four, Shadows, Set is transformed into the bear and is chasing his sisters. Set becomes real and his sisters are masks, taking on the "shapes of immortality." "He could no longer recognize them; they were masks. They turned and ran again. And there came upon him a loneliness like death. He moved on, a shadow receding into shadows" (314). Set is transformed into the bear; he is running after his sisters, reenacting the legend of Tsoai. As the narrative progresses, the emphasis moves from realistic, the logical explanation of Set's illness, to his mythic cure--his transformation into a bear. Set's transformation, healing, occurs in the same manner as a canvas is given life by a painter, through the application of lines, shapes and shadows.

The process by which Set comes to know and gain control of his bear power constitutes much of the narrative strand that deals with him. He is a familiar character in Native literature: a displaced, mixed-blood Native, unaware of his Native ancestry and its spiritual dimensions. He is alienated and dislocated from his heritage. The cause of his dislocation is neither as specific nor as condemning of the dominant "white society" as the dislocations in *House Made of Dawn* or Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony.* In both those novels young men are returning to their reservations, mentally tormented by their war experiences and are unable to integrate into their Native culture. Consequently, a traditional ceremony is performed to cure them of the malignant effects of their participation in the war. Set's dislocation is circumstantial. In an orphanage and removed from his culture after his parents' deaths, he grew up without the knowledge of his extended family and its bear power. For him, his unknown bear power is reflected in his art. The flourishes of painting followed by his obsession for capturing one scene of a boy in a bush, lead to his mental break down and admittance into a mental institution. Until he goes to his father's home after his mental break down, he does not know his bear power and its destructive potential. Set's integration involves perceiving the nature of his attraction to bears and then, with Grey's help, accepting his role as the boy in the legend of Tsoai.

Before his transformation, a celebrated professional, forty-four-year-old, visual artist, Set is disillusioned with his life, his success, and, more important to him, his art, and yearns for a child to help him vicariously recapture his naive excitement for the artistic process:

> He wanted a child. He wanted a child to come to his studio, to look at the splatter of paint on the walls, the floor, his easel, to see the drawings on the planes . . . And for a moment the child's eyes would have been wide with wonder. But the dealers and critics were narrow-eyed and glib. (37)

Set believes that he paints for no purpose: "he painted in vain, in order to relieve the terrible boredom of God" (39). His thoughts still on the creative process, he says, "And the bear--ah! He used both hands when he made the bear. Imagine a bear proceeding from the hands of God!" (39). Set associates recapturing his imaginative spark with seeing the artistic process as a child does and with God, the artist who made bears. The relationship between his desire for a child and his fixation for bears is not comprehensible to Set. As the novel proceeds, the relationship is made manifest.

There are three stages that lead to Set's integration with and acceptance of his bear power. The first begins with his discovery of his Native heritage and the bear bundle that contains his symbolic bear power. The second involves interaction with the bear power. For Set, this interaction leads to a mental breakdown. The third involves Grey, who teaches him how to control his bear power. As Sam and Ben aided Ike, Dave and Kroof aided Miranda, and Lucy and Bear aided Lou, Grey is the human complement to the bear--both teachers are needed. Grey teaches Set to become himself--a bear. He is the only one who becomes a bear. This final stage of his integration with his bear power and his healing is the ceremonial reenactment of the Myth of Tsoai, performed by Grey, which transforms Set into a bear.

The healing process begins with Set's journey home. Native protagonists return home rather than leave to achieve growth and maturation. William Bevis has noted that the movement in several Native Americans' novels displays a characteristic he has labeled "homing in" (580). The journey of a Native protagonist is not, as St. Jean de Crevecoeur wrote of Americans, those who leave the old to take the new (46), but the reverse. The process of "homing in" involves realignment with the traditional Native world. When *The Ancient Child* opens, Set is not in the process of denying his Native heritage; in fact, he is unaware of it. He does, however, have an inexplicable, to him, attraction to bears.

The journey begins when a telegram arrives advising Set that his paternal grandmother is dying and requesting that he come quickly before she dies. Before this he had never considered his Nativeness: "Set closed his eyes and held his breath. In the confusion and anxiety of being a child and an orphan, he had never come to know where his father was buried, only the abstraction: *out there, where he came from*" (63). He does not know his grandmother or any of his paternal relatives. With the arrival of this telegram, he is compelled to understand his Kiowa father's people and ignore his White mother's, who were responsible for putting him in a foster home after his father's death. After their deaths, Set had lived in an orphanage until he was adopted by a kindly, enlightened, philosophy professor from San Francisco. Curious, Set journeys back to Oklahoma and his Kiowa roots.

The connection between the child and the bear is first made when Set arrives at his grandmother's house, as he notices a child hiding in the bushes:

> Then, as he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, he saw the boy. The boy stood--seemed suspended--in the black interior of a lean-to, a brush arbor, perhaps thirty or forty yards away. He peered out of the depth as out of a cave, across the bright foreground, without expression. Set thought at first that the boy must be deranged, so strange and unsettling was his sudden and wild appearance. But his gaze was a good deal more incisive than an idiot's. (60)

A boy in a cave-like bush--this is a vision of the ancient child, the figure from the legend projecting itself inexplicably and unsettlingly to Set, who does not know this visionary child is a bear. This visual imagery is like an idea struggling to actualize itself on a canvas. Set does not yet recognize himself as this bear-child.

On this first trip to Oklahoma, Set becomes keenly aware of his dislocation from his father's family and from his cultural heritage:

> He had a strange feeling there, as if some ancestral intelligence had been awakened in him for the first time. There in the wild growth and the soft glowing earth, in the muddy water at his feet, was something profoundly original. He could not put his finger on it, but it was there. It was itself genesis, he thought, not genesis in the public domain, not an Old Testament tale, but *his* genesis. (64)

In the soil of his ancestral Oklahoma home, he feels, for the first time, a sense of connection with his roots, "his genesis," and is compelled to discover "*his* genesis" which, as we find out, is the power of the bear and the ancient child, the boy hiding in the bush.

Unknown to him, Set's transformation into a bear had been taking place since he returned to Oklahoma for his grandmother's funeral. He does not realize that she called him home for a purpose, to tell him of his heritage, and to enable his transformation. Although she died before his arrival, she did pass on the knowledge of Set to Grey, a young medicine woman learning her capacity to heal. Grey knows that Set is the bear: "*And is he then the bear, Grandmother? Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes*" (116). Grey gives Set his sacred, ancestral bundle, containing the bear power. In part one, when he receives his bear medicine at the Kiowa's soldier society dance, a dance that commemorates the warriors in the tribe, Set was immediately influenced by its power: "He felt a kind of euphoria . . . he felt a trembling in his hands. . . . His whole being shivered under his skin" (115). In response he remembers his father's story of the boy who turned into a bear. What Set remembers are the questions his father asked: "And the boy, Loki, what became of him?. . . What brought him to the camp?" (121).

The Kiowa power of the bear besieges Set on his return to San Francisco with the bundle, as if the bear were seeking to overcome him. His thoughts are crowded with images of the bear. His understanding of the Euro-American world, in which he was raised and to this point existed, collapses. The trip to his father's home has him thinking of his childhood. As Set tries to reconstruct childhood memories of his father, all he can remember are the bear stories, cautionary European folktales, that were told to him by a nun at the orphanage:

> Bears have been of significance to Set even before he went home to Oklahoma. In the orphanage he remembered a coercive story Sister Stella Francesca told him to prevent him attempting to venture beyond the garden of the orphanage. She lectured him on the grave sin of breaking the "Castle Rules," as she liked to call the home's two-page list of regulations. And then she placed in his mind forever the notion of "bee-wolves," which she said was an old, old name for bears. Bee-wolves were rumored to exist in the little park beneath the west window of the tower. Sag's Wood, with its serpentine paths, its green benches and patches of daisies and buttercups, was in Loki's mind then a hotbed of bears. (74)

This passage alludes to the Anglo-European mythic, heroic associations of the bear, or bee-wolves as they are known in Anglo-Saxon. Loki, Set's childhood name, although not associated with bears, is an allusion to the trickster-like, shape-shifting heroic character of Norse mythology. Stella Francesca, whose name relates to the stars and echoes Saint Francis of Assisi, who loved animals in a Christian way, provides Set a non-Native view of the bear. The warning recalled by him in this passage foreshadows the events of the last chapter, where he is ceremonially transformed into a bear running after his sisters as they are changed into the stars of Ursa Major. To be healed, Set must challenge the "castle rules," the non-Native structure within which he had been raised and was living. These childhood memories confirm that the bear is part of Set, but beyond his own consciousness.

In part two of the novel, "Lines," the second stage of his development, Set undergoes a physical transformation and acquires bear-like characteristics. He becomes obsessed with himself. As this section begins Set is looking into a mirror, examining his face. "Are you Set?" he asks himself. "No." Instead he is reminded of Nanook, dog of God, the bear, the Inuit name for polar bears (132). He foreshadows his part in the Kiowa legend of Tsoai in his self-portraits:

> Trees in shadow emerged, and a creeping figure among the trees . . . they expressed a certain reality in me. I didn't know what it was, but I knew that it was, and I knew that it mattered greatly to me in some way . . . I was going to recognize and understand it sooner or later, and the act of understanding or recognition was going to be of the deepest importance to me. (144)

In his art, he reflects the boy in the arbor, subconsciously rehearsing for his transformation into the bear. In Paris, having just had sex, his lover Alais Sancerre comments on his hairy body: "You have hair on your head and on your shoulders and on your chest and back, on your arms and legs, even on your hands and feet. It is quite remarkable" (210).

The result of the onslaught of the bear images, physical, recalled, imagined, and painted, is Set's admission to a psychiatric hospital after his first visit to Oklahoma. Confined, he is suffering, as we would presume, a nervous breakdown. Set has told the psychiatrist he is a bear. The doctor is incredulous and attempts a psychological, clinical explanation for this infatuation with bears: "He had suffered severe fatigue and depression brought on by stress and strain" (241). Set disputes the psychiatrist's diagnosis in an unleashing of his bear power:

> Charles Teague Terriman came every other day to talk to him about bears. Set was both amused and resentful.

> Terriman knew wonderful stories, gleaned from the annals of folklore and witchcraft and medical mythology, but did not tell them well, and without sensitivity or shame he made crude and intolerable invasions into Set's mind. Set was at first uncooperative, and then he was hostile. On a Thursday morning, two days before he was to be released, Set drove with his right hand a small vase, containing a single rose, into Dr. Terriman's face, just as Terriman was saying, "You see, Locke, the bear is an ancient symbol of the perilous aspect of the unconscious, and--" Two of Terriman's teeth were broken, and his upper lip was lacerated. (241-42)

Set's violent reaction dramatically points to a different way of perceiving the nature of the bear--one that is not derived from or contingent on European or American preoccupation for logical or psychological explanations of reality but derived from Native American, specifically Kiowa, myth. It exemplifies the violent potential of bear power to which Momaday refers and also suggests a total rejection of the western medical treatment Set is receiving in this hospital. To be healed, he must embrace, not reject, his bear power.

Learning to control the bear power is the third stage of Set's transformation, for which he requires the assistance of Grey. Through Grey Momaday distinguishes the Kiowa mores from Euro-American mores and the Euro-American psychological explanations of Set's illness. Grey is able to heal Set, something the psychiatrist is unable to do, by supplying him with the ceremony he needs to identify and control his bear power. Knowing of the ancient child and understanding that her role is to assist Set's transformation, she intuitively perceives the complexity of Set's anxieties:

> He intimidated her, because she was still finding her way. But he was losing his, and this she knew better than he. The bear was taking hold of him. Loosing its power upon him, and he did not know what it was. In spite of his considerable knowledge and experience, his fame and fortune, it was she who would bring him to his destiny. She would be his mentor. She would reveal him to himself. This is what she believed. But she did not believe more than this. She did not know if she could give him medicine strong enough to overcome the power of the bear in him. The unknown was the largest part of the universe. (229)

Grey knows that to heal, Set must let go of his Euro-American heritage and fully embrace and control his Native, bear self.

However, Grey must go through a transformation of her own before she is able to help him; she matures from a unruly girl to a medicine woman. Using her dreams as a guide, she finds her own Native self, her own purpose. Momaday explains the importance of Grey's dreams as part of her maturation and their role in rehabilitating Set:

> To dream—that was at the center of life, hers anyway. She had not decided to be a medicine woman. Such things are not decided, after all. She was becoming a medicine woman because it was in her to do so; it was her purpose, her reason for being; she *dreamed* it.
>
> Already she had considerable power, but she would have more, as she learned more of the world. In her dreams the grandmother instructed her. . . . In her dreams she knew of things that had long since been lost to others. . . . And she knew of the ancient child, the boy who turned into a bear.
>
> To the grave of the grandmother she would take pollens and herbs and teas, and she would anoint the earthen mound and speak over it words that were sacred. And she spoke, too, over Catlin Setman's grave. It was as a kind of intermediary that she thought of Catlin Setman. She had not known him, of course, but she had known him, dreamed him. His voice was of a different character from that of the grandmother's in her dreams. His place in the story was strategic; he stood in crucial relation to the grandmother and to the indefinite line of ancestors on the one hand, and to his son, Locke Setman, on the other, who was to be important in her life. Indeed, the beginning of this digression had been made; she had passed to Locke

> Setman the bear medicine. In that initial moment had been power and mystery and meaning; the proprieties had been observed, the giveaway had been accomplished, a marriage had been made. Locke Setman, Set, was a name she spoke often to herself now. It was the name of the man who would require her strength and wisdom and spirit, whose consummate need would be her need. (173-74)

As this passage demonstrates, Grey's dreams are her education, connecting her to the earth, providing her insights into Set's family and her future purpose. The intensity of Grey's dreams is a vital component in the development of her ability to heal Set and also to mature, both physically and spiritually.

Grey's early thoughts and dreams are cluttered with images of Billy the Kid, as Set's are cluttered with bear stories other than Tsoai. Tantalized by western American myth, she imagines herself a participant in the making of the Billy the Kid legend:

> She was still a girl, and in the day she dreamed of Billy the Kid and gave herself up to the ordinary occupations of her life. She looked after Worcester Meat, she assisted Jessie in this way and that, she say to the well-being of Dog. And she looked after herself. She read and listened to music--and she worked on the “memorial,’ as she called it. It occurred to her that Billy the Kid, companion, lover, confidant, and hero of her girlhood, who had drawn her into the deepest mythic currents of the Wild West, was deserving of commemoration, hers especially. She had begun therefore to write an elegy and farewell, a “memorial,” which otherwise bore the title “The Strange and True Story of My Life with Billy the Kid.” It was to be composed of twenty-one poems and prose pieces, one for each year of Billy's life, and it would reflect him in both his human and legendary dimensions. And in some sense it would be a memorial to her own childhood. (174-75)

Grey's knowledge of Billy the Kid was derived from a book called *The Saga of Billy the Kid* written by Walter Noble Burns in 1926 (Tuska 125). According to Jon Tuska, this version of the legend provides the Kid with a Janus image, "variously a hero and a villain" (129). Grey imagines, as Momaday writes, "that side of Billy that was kind and gentle, that part of him that secured his legend beyond time. It is, she knew, the admixture of the violent and the benign that seems so central to the American experience and so powerful in the American imagination" (189). Like Set, Grey must first let go of the tantalizing American images, myths, and that "admixture of the violent and the benign," that have taken hold of her.

Through intensely imagining Billy, Grey realizes who she is and the function she will have in the ceremony that heals Set. It is in one of her reveries that Billy tells her that he is a coward and that it is the Kiowa legend of Sitting Bear, Set-angya, that she should revere and not him:

> "I can't sing," Billy said. "Besides, that old man you're talkin' about, shoot, he was brave in the middle, do you know what I mean? He was brave on principle, according to an ideal. . . . The truth is, that old man was honest-to-God brave, and bravery was deep in his mind and in the minds of his people. Well, not their *minds*, really, but their hearts. That old man wasn't afraid to die. I don't think I ever knew a man in my life who wasn't afraid to die. You know, I think of that old man goin' after the bones of his son. Shoot, I wouldn't have done it. You know what? I was scared to death. I didn't kill men on principle. I killed them because they damn well meant to kill me. . . . Your old man, Sitting Bear, wouldn't have gone to Texas to fetch a rifle, but he would have gone, and did go, to claim the bones of his son. Those are two very different things, aren't they? The one is the act of a boy who doesn't yet understand that he can die, and the other is the act of a man who knows all about death but isn't afraid of it. (225)

Even within her dreams of Billy, there is a constant presence of the bear, although she does not acknowledge it at first. She must determine who Set will become: outlaw Billy or Set-angya. Grey's dreams are telling her to grow up. As Louis Owens writes, Grey "outgrows the Euramerican western myth of eternal irresponsibility--that for which the 'Kid' stands--she grows into her role as medicine woman and helper in Set's realization of his place in the eternal Kiowa myth of transformation" (119). Only when she gives up western myth and becomes wholly Native is she able to assist Set with his transformation.

Although Grey does not realize its significance until much later, her first dream reported in the novel is not of Billy the Kid but of sleeping with, and being licked into shape by, a bear:

> That night Grey dreamed of sleeping with a bear. There were spots and streaks of blue and yellow pollen at the great, soft eyes and above the long, shining lips. The bear drew her into its massive arms and licked her body and her hair. It hunched over her, curving its spine like a cat, until its huge body seemed to have absorbed her own. (10)

The bear impregnates her imagination, foreshadowing her marriage to Set, the bear.

In many ways Grey is like a bear. Momaday accords her mythic ursine qualities; in her physical appearance, she is like a bear. She takes her appearance from Greek mythology: "Her eyes were striking; their color ranged from gray to green to violet. They were eyes out of an ancient myth, epic and holy; they might have been Callisto's eyes"(18). Callisto, the Greek bear goddess, is one of Artemis' votaries, who was turned into a bear as punishment for her promiscuity.

However, in Kiowa terms, Grey is not a bear. Grey's Indian name, Koi-ehm-toya, like Set's, is derived from the Kiowa myth of Devil's Tower. In the Kiowa myth of Devil's Tower, as told in the novel, Koi-ehm-toya is the only one who grieves the loss of the children. She worries about her people and the children who have been attacked by the bear (23). Momaday writes: "Only old Koi-ehm-toya, one late morning when the snow swirled down and there was a general silence in the camp, emitted a series of sharp tremolo cries and cut off two fingers on her left hand" (131). Like Koi-ehm-toya in the myth, Grey embodies concern for her people, a concern that is central to the part she plays as medicine woman in reuniting Set with his Native self--the bear.

The last stage of Set's transformation begins with a ceremony performed by Grey, with the aid of the Navajo Perfecto Atole, the keeper of the bear paw. The ceremony does more than recognize the influence of the bear. It allows for the completion of the transformation. Grey takes several steps of preparation: she performs a peyote ceremony (230), butchers a calf (244), and requests the aid of Perfecto Atole. On his horse, Perfecto Atole chases and threatens Set; he torments Set with the bear paw to draw the bear out of Set and to prepare him for his role in Tsoai. Instead of cowering from intimidation,

> Set glowered. A rage grew up in him so great that there was nothing else. He was beyond sickness and pain, sorrow and confusion and self-pity. In that moment he was mad with hatred, murderous. In his uttermost humiliation something of his will's power was unaccountably restored to him. It was as if he were purged by his own distemper. (288)

The violent, negative aspects of his bear power uncontrollably dominate Set and by the very force of that same bear power, "his will's power was unaccountably restored to him."

Once she has performed these tasks, Grey nourishes Set back to physical health, taking him to her home in Lukachukai, where her mother, sister, and niece still live a traditional lifestyle. There, Grey begins the final process of helping Set control his power. As well, they marry and Grey becomes pregnant, fulfilling her early dream.

When Set is physically strong he is ready to run, chase the girls, and invoke once again the legend of Devil's Tower; he is ready to become a bear, to exorcise its destructive effects. Set releases his bear power by running:

> In the night, in the black stillness of the hogan, Set took the medicine bundle in his hands and opened it. The smell of it permeated the whole interior. When he drew on the great paw, there grew up in him a terrible restlessness, wholly urgent, and his heart began to race. He felt the power of the bear pervade his being, and the awful compulsion to release it. (303-04)

Momaday describes Set's sensations as he goes through the physical metamorphosis. Set acquires the senses of the bear. First his vision blurs: "The objects on the ground at his feet were clear and sharply defined in his sight, but in the distance were only vague shapes in a light like fog" (313). Then his hearing becomes more acute: "he heard things he had never heard before." His sense of smell becomes more potent: "He could smell a thousand things at once and perceive them individually." And, he loses his ability to speak: "he had no longer a human voice." The transformation is Set's symbolic death; "there came upon him a loneliness like death." Set is spiritually healed; he is a bear.

The story of the ancient child is complete. The boy who became a bear became a Kiowa myth. The three strands of the story are, in the end, woven together with the transformation of Set into a bear. Alone, in the looming presence of Tsoai, the rock tree, Set finds "the vision he had sought" (313). "They were laughing, and they drew away from him. He followed, and they began to shout, taunting him, entreating him to play the game, and Loki began to run. *Set, set!* they shouted" (312). They tease him, as Perfect Atole did and, Loki becomes a bear, Set. As Loki runs, becoming the bear, the legend is relived; Set becomes whole. He has achieved "a state of physical and spiritual balance," both within himself and with his environment (Scarberry-Garcia 2).

The bear is symbolic of the sacred relationship between the Kiowa and the wilderness. Retelling and recreating the legend commemorates this relationship. Momaday reminds his readers of this sacred relationship in the epilogue; as Koi-ehm-toya's great-great-grandson watches the sky he is aware of the "whole history of the people . . . played out in the myriad points of light" (315). The bear connects Grey and Set to the earth, making them whole, confirming their Kiowa heritage.

CONCLUSION

Why a bear? The bear has a long history of symbolic involvement in the myth, folklore, and literature of both Native and non-Native cultures. There are both Native and European elements in the characterizations and symbolic values of bears in the narratives I have discussed. This mingling of diverse responses to the bear has created a unique and important body of North American literature.

Why a teacher? The bear is able to teach the characters and readers, who encounter and interact with it because of its varied symbolic significance. Writers are able to draw on the varied symbolic depictions of the bear as representations of conflicting values. The bear, as a character, is then enabled to portray either the consequences or resolution of the conflict. The resolution offered through the representation of the bear in most of the works I have discussed exemplifies the impact and adoption of a Native perspective over a European perspective. The bear teaches the value of a respectful and reciprocal relationship with nature (or, in some cases, the consequences of a lack of such a relationship). This message is common to these North American stories. How the bear teaches these values, however, varies.

At the time Thorpe's "The Big Bear of Arkansas" was written, when Europeans were pressing westward across the North American continent, the bear represented conflicting symbolic values. To the European settlers, the bear represented the strongest, most vicious, opponent nature had to offer. Like the dense forest and bush, the bear was seen as an object which had to be cleared and eradicated in favor of settlement. The bear is initially represented from this point of view in Thorpe's story. However, as the story progresses the bear evolves, in the eyes of Thorpe's frontier hero, Jim Doggett, from insensate quarry to a respected, sensate being, which exists autonomously from the hunters who pursued it. By including in his story a view of the bear that approximates a Native view of reverence, Thorpe recognizes an injustice associated with the gratuitous slaughter of bears, a slaughter exemplified by the legendary Davy Crockett, who believed he was making North America safe for settlers by eradicating bears. Thorpe implicitly recognizes the potential detrimental impact of colonization on the wilderness.

Thorpe's bear portrayal, a blending of European and Native perspectives, provides the model for, and is fully realized in, Faulkner's "The Bear." Ben, the bear, is represented as having mythical, supernatural proportions and characteristics, a Native-like perspective, expressed by the character of Sam. The conflicting European perspective of the bear is implied to the reader and characterized by Boon. Faulkner's young hunter, Ike, learns respect for the bear from Sam, the bear's sympathetic, human, "Native" counterpart and learns pride, humility, and his place in the world from the bear.

Mailer's bear hunt illustrates the consequences of the American failure to embrace a Native perspective of respect and reverence for the bear. The bear hunt in Mailer's *Why Are We In Vietnam?* represents the detrimental impact of the corporate pursuit of wealth and power on both humanity and nature. The hunt presented is perverse because the bear is an outmatched opponent that cannot withstand the immense superiority and disproportionate force of mankind's weapons, just as the wilderness and human nature cannot withstand those same disproportionate forces.

In Thorpe, Faulkner, and Mailer the bear is literally delineated through the perspective of the characters who encounter it, as the object of the hunt, usually an affirmation of the hunter's prowess and power. The authors demonstrate the pedagogical importance of the bear by focusing on the hunter's ruminations on the magnificence of the bear and by highlighting the view of the bear as a trophy, a memento of conquest, as justification of the hunter's freedom and individualism and by contrasting the hunter's shift in perspective through encounters with the bears.

In the Canadian narratives, the message is the same. The bear, however, is portrayed more diversely, not simply as quarry of the hunt. The bear plays a more integral, and even interactive, role in these stories. Seton and Roberts present the bear as independent of mankind, yet detrimentally influenced by mankind's presence in the wilderness. Seton dignifies the bears' response to mankind's presence by anthropomorphising bears' lives; lives which have been endangered are unjustifiably sacrificed by mankind's arrogant, careless indifference to the wilderness and its inhabitants. Roberts' *Heart of the Ancient Wood* suggests the potential for compatibility between humanity and nature, as does Faulkner's story, although the mechanism for attaining it is not the traditional hunt, but a literary fable. Roberts acknowledges incredulity over the possibility of human-bear interaction by presenting the human-bear relationship as a fantasy, a distinction that is challenged by Engel and transcended by Momaday.

Implicit in these narratives is the recognition that negative consequences, particularly to our environment, flow from human choices and attitudes which fail to acknowledge and respect nature, as embodied by the bear. This theme is taken a step further in Marian Engel's *Bear*, a modern adaptation of Roberts' story. Engel's Bear teaches and heals her protagonist by reintegrating her with her natural, instinctual self. Engel blends the fantasy of Roberts' human-bear relationship and the realism of Seton's narratives together in *Bear* and, in this context, suggests that maintaining a relationship with nature is essential to human wellness, a perspective which comes close to the explicitly Native perspective which Momaday portrays in his work.

Momaday, through his use of the bear and his retelling of the bear legend of Devil's Tower, suggests that humanity and nature are one. Acceptance and acknowledgment of mankind as part of nature, not as autonomous from nature, are the key to wholeness. Momaday presents the conflict that is killing Set as the conflict between Native and non-Native myth and culture, a conflict evident in the conflicting representations of the bear. The instructive bear, however, is the Native spiritual bear that imposes its existence on Set, first subconsciously and finally consciously, eradicating the European bear of his childhood. The bear embodies the wilderness, as Momaday asserts in his cast of characters, and when Set becomes a bear, he becomes part of the wilderness. He becomes whole, healthy, when he transforms into his Native bear self, much as Ike, Miranda, and Lou attempt to become through their encounters with the bear. However, the non-Native writers stop short of dissolving the human-bear barrier.

The bear's consistent representation in these narratives as nature's messenger, advisor, teacher, and even healer--in short, as entity as opposed to object--is indicative of the growth and development of a distinctly North American body of literature. At the heart of the narratives is the conflict between traditional "Native" values and "European based" North American attitudes towards the wilderness. Although variously portrayed--as quarry, as mother, as lover, as self--the bear in all of the narratives I have discussed is the "mythic embodiment of nature," as Momaday stated.

There is an increasing awareness through the progression of the narratives discussed of the interdependence of humanity and nature. The earlier works of Thorpe, Seton, Roberts, Faulkner, and Mailer, by their characterization and representation of the bear, recognize that this interdependence, if ignored or unacknowledged, will have a mutually and reciprocally detrimental impact. Conversely, as expressed by Engel and Momaday, and to a lesser extent by Faulkner and Roberts, this interdependence, if fully acknowledged and embraced, will provide wholeness, wellness, sustenance, and the means for mankind's survival. The bear is the link, the bridge, between and connecting humanity and nature.

A significant point which is made by looking at the narratives as a unit, or as a genre, is the consistent acknowledgment that resolution of the conflict is in the domain of humanity and not nature. Human actions and choices impact nature, not the reverse. Accordingly, although the bear is an apt and able teacher, the bear alone, as nature's advocate and representative, is able to impart only the consequences of human choices and actions. With the aid of a human counterpart, the bear is able not only to impart consequences, but also to confirm and reinforce respect and reverence for nature. Sam, Dave, Lucy, and Grey share the role of teacher with the bear. The point is that our existence is a joint, mutual effort.

These narratives depict integration with the natural world and the dangers of physical, emotional, and intellectual separation from the "animal" part of us. Significantly, the bear, because of its distinctly "animal qualities," provides a link between the natural world and the alienated protagonists. The bear is the teacher, the healer.

The influence of Native American culture on shaping the literature of North America is just beginning to be recognized, understood, and appreciated by non-Natives as a vital part of our collective North American culture. I hope my discussion will be of value to this emerging area of study. This study aims to contribute to the broader, ongoing investigation of the nature and significance of animal motifs in both Native and non-Native literature and to our relationship with the natural enviroment.

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